

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



April 2017

Vol. 122, No. 4

₹ 15.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Steps to Realisation II

Now comes Uparati which consists in not thinking of things of the senses. Most of our time is spent in thinking about sense-objects, things which we have seen, or we have heard, which we shall see or shall hear, things which we have eaten, or are eating, or shall eat, places where we have lived, and so on. We think of them or talk of them most of our time. One who wishes to be a Vedantin must give up this habit. Then comes the next preparation (it is a hard task to be a philosopher!), Titiksha, the most difficult of all. It is nothing less than the ideal forbearance—‘Resist not evil’. This requires a little explanation. We may not resist an evil, but at the same time we may feel very miserable. A man may say very harsh things to me, and I may not outwardly hate him for it, may not answer him back, and may restrain myself from apparently getting angry, but anger and hatred may be in my mind, and I may feel very badly towards that man. That is not non-resistance; I should be without any feeling of hatred or anger, without any thought of resistance; my mind must then be as calm as if nothing had happened. And only when I have got to that state, have I attained to non-resistance, and not before. Forbearance of all misery, without even a thought of resisting or



driving it out, without even any painful feeling in the mind, or any remorse—this is Titiksha. Suppose I do not resist, and some great evil comes thereby; if I have Titiksha, I should not feel any remorse for not having resisted. When the mind has attained to that state, it has become established in Titiksha. People in India do extraordinary things in order to practice this Titiksha. They bear tremendous heat and cold without caring, they do not even care for snow, because they take no thought for the body; it is left to itself, as if it were a foreign thing. The next qualification required is Shraddha, faith. One must have tremendous faith in religion and God. Until one has it, one cannot aspire to be a Jnani.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.396-7.

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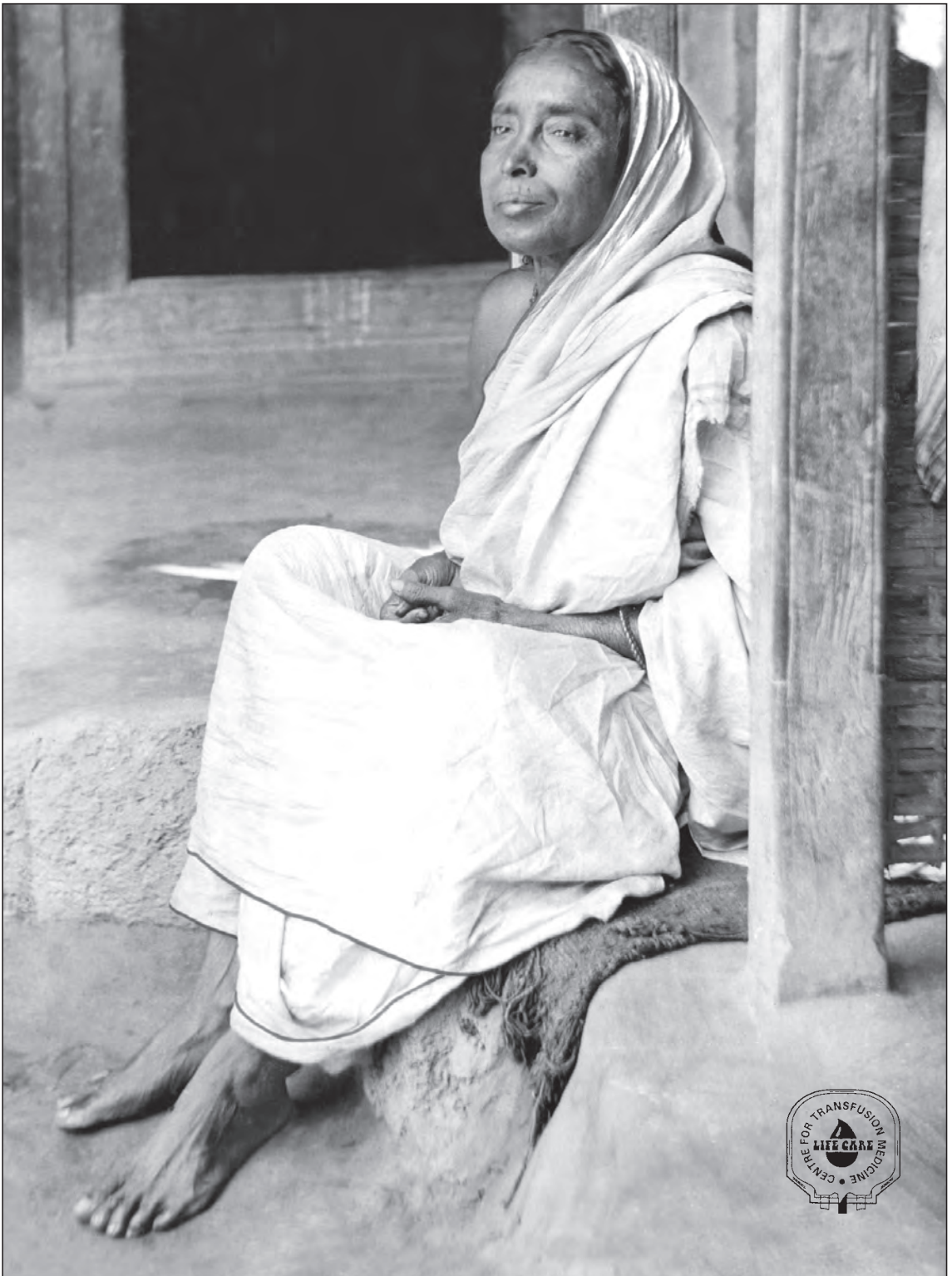
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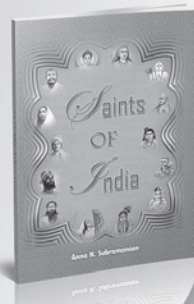
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The book is a compilation of talks given to college students by Sri 'Anna' N.Subramanian. He was a householder-disciple of Swami Shivananda and served for many years in the Ramakrishna Mission educational institutions in Chennai.



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**Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),
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The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 20 Crores. So far Rs. 15.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 05.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co- operation immensely.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

Vishnupadananda

**(Swami Vishnupadananda)
Secretary**

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Model of the Proposed New Temple



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Maitrayaniya Upanishad

April 2017
Vol. 122, No. 4

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यात्राप्युक्तमथ खलु य उद्गीथः स प्रणवो यः प्रणवः स उद्गीथ इत्यसौ वा आदित्य उद्गीथ एष प्रणवा इत्येवं ह्याहोद्गीथं प्रणवाख्यं प्रणेतारं भारूपं विगतनिद्रं विजरं विमृत्युं त्रिपदं त्र्यक्षरं पुनः पञ्चधा ज्ञेयं निहितं गुहायामित्येवं ह्याहोर्द्ध्वमूलं त्रिपाद्ब्रह्म शाखा आकाशवाय्वग्न्युदकभूम्यादय एकोऽश्वत्थनामैतद् ब्रह्मैतस्यैतत्तेजो यदस । आदित्य ओमित्येतदक्षरस्य चैतत् तस्मादोमित्यनेनैतदुपासीताजस्रमित्येकोऽस्य सम्बोधयितेत्येवं ह्याह एतदेवाक्षरं पुण्यमेतदेवाक्षरं परम् ।

एतदेवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति यस्य तत् ॥

॥६.४॥

Athanyatrapy-uktam-atha khalu ya udgithah sa pranavo yah pranavah sa udgitha ityasau va aditya udgitha esha pranava ityevam hyahodgitham pranavakhyam pranetaram bha-rupam vigata-nidram vijaram vimrityum tri-padam tryaksharam punah panchadha jneyam nihitam guhayam ityevam hyahorddhva-mulam tripad-brahma shakha akasha-vayv-agny-udaka-bhumi-yadaya eko'shvatttha-namaitad brahmaitasyaitat-tejo yadasa. Aditya omityetad-aksharasya chaitat tasmad-om-ity-anenaitad-upasitajasram-ity eko'sya sambodhayitety evam hy aha (6.4)

And it has been said elsewhere: 'Now then, that which is Udgitha is Pranava; that which is Pranava is Udgitha. In this way, this yonder sun indeed is Udgitha, and this one is Pranava' [*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 1.5.1]. For thus it is said: 'The Udgitha called Pranava, the leader of Vedic sacrifices, with a luminous form, sleepless, ageless, deathless, three-footed, three-lettered, also known as fivefold, is hidden in the secret chamber of heart.' It is also said: 'The three-footed Brahman has its root above. Its branches are space, wind, fire, water, earth, and the like. This Brahman is named 'the lone fig tree' and its radiance is called the Sun and it is also the radiance of the syllable Om. Therefore, it should be continuously worshipped and addressed with the syllable Om alone. Thus it has been said: 'This syllable, indeed is holy, this syllable indeed, is supreme Brahman. Knowing this syllable, indeed, whatever one desires, one becomes' [Cf. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.16]. (6.4)

THIS MONTH

THE PRESENT-DAY TREND of avoiding or having less and less interest in higher thoughts is discussed and its causes explored in **The Decline of Higher Thinking**. The need for higher thinking and that it is the uniqueness of human beings is also pointed out.

In **The Science in Spirituality**, Gopal C Bhar, honorary professor of physics at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, explains that the human being is a combination of lower and higher tendencies. He tells us that all physical and mental suffering comes when we become indifferent to our spiritual nature. He draws parallels between science and spirituality and states that just as in science one has to overcome the gravitational, solar, and the universe's forces, similarly in spirituality one has to overcome our tendencies, illusion, and distraction.

In the thirteenth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, he shows us that there are different levels of existence that are accessed by reason: common sense, deductive logic, and inductive logic. It is only when these levels of reasoning are transcended and one engages in philosophical reasoning by including the subject, the consciousness, that one becomes the infinite.

Swami Sandarshananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the fourth instalment of **Saga of Epic**

Proportions, shows how Sister Nivedita's completely selfless service for the cause of India in various fields has got her a permanent place in the history of India. She was independent and a strong force for the British government to reckon with. She stood strong in her struggles to ensure that India does not completely lose herself to the foreign rulers. She worked all her life to see that India was rebuilt in the manner Swamiji had envisioned.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Shraddha**.

God's grace dawns according to the fruits of our actions also known as karma. If we do good actions, we reap good fruits. If we do bad actions, we reap bad fruits. Though it comes as god's blessings, it is essentially the result of our own actions and remains till the effect of our actions remain. This is the moral of the second and the concluding instalment of the story **The Goddess's Blessings**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Ravi M Gupta, associate professor of religious studies at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA and Kenneth R Valpey, research fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and a regular visiting scholar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong have written **The Bhagavata Purana: Sacred Text and Living Tradition**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

The Decline of Higher Thinking

IF YOU ARE READING THESE WORDS sitting amidst your friends, relatives, colleagues, or just among the public—and if you are reading quite intently—you are definitely going to have your share of curious glances, and depending upon where you live, strange frowns. While the very exercise of reading something printed on dead wood seems to be increasingly seen with the same feeling with which one sees the skeleton of a dinosaur in a museum of natural history, reading something with concentration for a span of more than a few minutes is seen as revolutionary or something that only people engaged in academics ought to do. We live in a world where pulp fiction has more currency than classic literature, where magazines are flipped through mainly for the photographs, and where a four-hundred-word piece of writing is considered ‘profound’, irrespective of the content, only because of the length.

No, this is not a debate about the decrease of the reading habit, though that may be one of the causes of the issue being discussed here: the decline of higher thinking. It is quite incredible that a discussion about the major questions of life and death is considered ‘heavy’ or ‘deep’ and pop psychology tells one to ‘just live the moment’. Fun has become serious business and serious business has ‘gone with the wind’. What we discuss over coffee has often been the yardstick of the level of thinking of the human civilisation of the time. And the unfortunate truth is that today, when, and that is a big when, friends meet over coffee or for any other meal for that matter, our electronic gadgets pull our eyeballs

more than the contours of the faces of our fellow beings. Higher thinking today translates into the various tips and tricks one needs to know

Without higher thinking, the human being would cease to have any uniqueness.

to find one’s way through the intricate maze of apps one’s device is crowded with. We have given the word ‘hoarding’, a totally different dimension. Instead of hoarding wealth, or along with it, today we like to hoard apps. In the spree of speed we thus artificially create, we have no time for the good old talk. And most people talk only to their counsellors!

The problem with our thinking faculties today is that they are seldom used for thinking independently. We are mostly stuck in the grooves we have created or have been asked to follow. This is the problem, but what led to this? To think one needs solitude. And we live in a time when even the penguins of Antarctica do not seem to get that solitude they were naturally endowed with because of their remote location. We human beings have wrecked their shores too in the name of geological explorations. The result is that these penguins, like countless other living beings, and the human beings are increasingly losing solitude and consequently, sanity. We could easily use technology to create solitary spaces much like we use it to create soundproof studios, but we seldom do that, probably because solitude does not pay!

The second reason of a decline in higher

thinking is a plethora of readily-accessible options. With a variety of choices, one becomes busier in selecting from them and in understanding their different natures. Also, because they are easily available, there is not much striving, at least not to the extent of one's predecessors. A struggle forces the mind to think innovatively to meet the goals with the minimum effort. However, when the goal is met with no struggle, the mind is left with very little to do. This creates a vacuity and when this state of the mind goes unattended for a long time, various psychological ailments develop. In effect this means that since the human mind is very efficient, the horizons of thinking should be raised higher and higher if human beings must maintain their sanity. To remain at peace, the mind should be given higher avenues of engagement. For this to happen, our focus should not be on quantitative but qualitative enrichment and that too, not from an objective perspective, but from the subjective standpoint. The mind should be constantly striving to attain a subjective qualitative fulfilment in life. The present-day society is not focussing on this aspect and therefore, we have created the third reason for the decline in critical thinking.

The third cause of our problem is an increase in entertainment. Entertainment could never become an addiction till the recent decades. Human beings had no respite from existential struggles and the little leisure was not addictive. Today, our basic needs and even elaborate luxuries are taken care of by the minute, and modes of entertainment have become so alluring that many of us have nothing to do but to get immersed in entertainment. That which was supposed to give a break from the humdrum routine is breaking our daily lives. Electronic games, movies, television series, social media, and a host of other such distractions prevent us from doing anything meaningful. That these are all available

at a click of the mouse has only aggravated the crisis. Addictions involving these kinds of entertainment have been classified as mental illnesses by psychologists around the world. It is imperative for maintaining the quality of being human that we reduce or stop outright the frenzied pace of entertaining that we are deluded into.

The fourth and the most important cause of the decline in higher thinking is noise. Sound is produced by friction and the present-day world seems to be having that in large quantities and almost everywhere. While technology has shown us the dream of an exceedingly comfortable life, it has increased the physical noise of our surroundings. It has robbed our minds of the constant analysis that it had to do in the past and in its stead the mind has been filled with noise. This noise is the noise of expectations. It is the din caused by the cries of the agony of insecurities about the present and the future. This sound of vacuum has created sleepless nights for many a person. Silence, both external and internal, gives birth to higher thoughts.

The subtler the manner of connecting with the universe, the higher would be our thoughts. Touch is the grossest connection with the external world and the perception thus acquired is also the grossest. The perception through the mind, that is, through reading or thinking, is the subtlest and is a natural way of heightening the sublimity of our thinking. Without higher thinking, the human being would cease to have any uniqueness and would be on a par with the other living beings. The death of the characteristic human quality of higher thinking would lead us to a world of savages, which in many ways we have already created. Therefore, it is necessary that we inculcate a regular habit of higher thinking and pass it on to our successive generations. This is the only way to save all that is good and humane from perishing.



The Science in Spirituality

Gopal C Bhar

THE HUMAN BEING is an amalgam of matter and spirit, lower and higher tendencies. In spite of having sound physical and mental health, many of us continue to suffer as we neglect this inbuilt spirituality of ours. It has been said by many thinkers: 'We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but are spiritual beings having a human experience.' When one is raised to the level of the spirit and knows oneself to be one with the eternal divinity, one will find that one's limited egocentric self has vanished yielding to the cosmic self of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Suffering and feeling helpless is due to our own erroneous dependence on matter and thinking of us as being separate from the spirit. Even a little touch of divine inspiration will transfigure human beings and save the world from great disaster, as said in the Bhagavadgita.¹

Swami Vivekananda in his *Raja Yoga* attempted to prove that religious approaches are also scientific as much as any discipline of science. Like a scientist, no man can be religious unless he has the same perception as the experience of ancient rishis. He made a very interesting observation on reason vis-à-vis religion:

Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of the opinion that the sooner it is done the better. ... Not only will it be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater

strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.²

He substantiated his observations with the experiments of Sri Ramakrishna with Mother Kali.

Science is a systematised collection of knowledge about nature gained by using reason and sense experience to discover the underlying laws of nature, which explain how nature is organised and allow one to make accurate predictions about nature's processes or objects' behaviour. Thus it has penetrated step-by-step into the mysteries of nature, although the basic whys and wherefores of many things are still unknown. Scientists have unmistakably demonstrated that the message carried by the sense organs to the perceiver is partial and imperfect. For example, a stick appears bent under water, and a piece of steel normally looks solid but appears porous under X-ray. Similarly, a person may be highly successful by material standards and even have great intellectual capabilities but may be greatly barren and false in one's inner life with moral defects and compromising behaviour. Even though the human intellect has evolved to the extent that it can grasp the subtleties of the universe, it cannot go out of itself to measure its own cause. The ultimate cause is beyond its reach. It is unknown and unknowable. In the search for metaphysical truth, the instrument of intuition can go further than the intellect. And Vedanta presents a more reliable approach to metaphysical truth than intellect. It declares that what is unknown and unknowable to intellect can

be realised as one's own Self. It teaches how to unlock the gates of pure intuition by practising self-control, selfless service, and concentration of mind. Vedanta is a way of living this life towards perfection, thereby giving us the means to see beyond the phenomena of sense perceptions. In Vedanta, the first stage is to shift one's perspective or viewpoint from the objective to the subjective. Swamiji writes on Vedanta: 'Whomsoever you hurt, you hurt yourself; they are all you. Whether you know it or not, through all hands you work, through all feet you move, you are the king enjoying in the palace, you are the beggar leading that miserable existence in the street; you are in the ignorant as well as in the learned, you are in the man who is weak, and you are in the strong; know this and be sympathetic' (3.425). Swamiji met with Nikola Tesla, an eminent scientist of the nineteenth century, to discuss prospects of science and Tesla later commented: 'The day science begins to study nonphysical phenomena; it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence.'³

According to T H Huxley, 'science is nothing but trained and organised common sense'.⁴ Common sense enables individuals with different sense-experiences to collectively perceive and judge the characteristics of physical things. Our perception of the world is determined through our sense organs. The mystics and Eastern sages on the other hand have confirmed the existence that is beyond sense perception. Vedanta is a journey of the mind. It is not a system of thought but is rather a psychic journey. It does not use the third-person approach normally used in science, but is based on the subjective or first-person experience. When the three processes of perception—the object, the observer, and the actual observation—are united, it is Advaita Vedanta. The journey may begin with the dualistic

or Dvaita, but ends with the non-dualistic or Advaita. While one perceives everything in nature through its three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, Advaita spirituality is *trigunatita*, beyond these three qualities.

Science and Spirituality

Knowledge or *vidya* gives power, pleasure, and honour. Both science and spirituality enrich us with knowledge, but that knowledge is superior, which leads us to liberation. Liberation from physical, mental, and external bonds is attained through the control of external nature with the help of science; while liberation from internal bonds is attained through ethics and religion. Hindu scriptures say: '*Sa vidya ya vimuktaye*; that which liberates is knowledge.'⁵ But the main role of knowledge is to free us from all these bondages: fear, doubts, inadequacy, and uncertainty. Total knowledge is *apara* and *para*, lower and higher, according to the *Mundaka Upanishad*. Despite the assertion that spiritual knowledge is higher, it is emphasised that cultivating both of them is required for our full-fledged development. The former knowledge is about doing, while the latter is about being. It is basically a way of developing a holistic way of life—living a mature and balanced life and achieving the integration of personality. It is a way of turning away from a 'having mode' of life to a 'being mode' of life. Both are empirical knowledge universally verifiable by experimenting commencing with observation, recording of data, followed by verification. These may be all together termed as *experience*, which is present in both science and spirituality; but two additional features such as *moral* and *psychological transformation* are required in spirituality, but are optional in science. It is possible to be simultaneously immoral and scientific, but it is impossible to be simultaneously immoral and spiritual. The unbridled use

of power has created all the ecological problems the world is facing today. They are a result of human greed and selfishness in science. Morality is the basis of spirituality. The scientific quest in spirituality was there even before much development in technology. That is why Swamiji said: 'Religion is being and becoming.'⁶ Both enrich and enhance the human life.

Truth is the regime of both science and spirituality; they have mutual kinship, although the roads they follow are different. Science is objective knowledge while spirituality is subjective knowledge. The former is of the external world while the latter is of the *internal* world of our body-mind complex. There is no such thing as Indian science or American science. Science also posits the truth as the unknown and continually refines its models in trying to approximate to it. Physicists derive their knowledge from physical experiments and mystics from meditative insights. The natural human tendency is to dwell on external objects and look for happiness in material pleasure though there are some to whom such transient joys of the phenomenal world are an illusion. They, through discriminatory understanding and renunciation, approach everlasting happiness.

In modern times people are valued not for *what they are*, but for *what they have*. It is impossible to know accurately what is going on in someone else's mind, but it is possible to get a fairly clear idea by looking at the person's behaviour. Most often, whether through conscious effort or unconscious habit, a person's inner life is separated from the outer. So, most of our judgments are based on incomplete

knowledge of others. The more someone identifies with material goods, the farther they move away from their inner world. The more one seeks fulfilment in the external world, the more one is empty in one's inner world, meaning thereby they have no freedom to express their inner aspiration. Swamiji writes in his letter to Mary Hale on 28 April 1897: 'Material science can only give worldly prosperity, whilst spiritual science is for eternal life. If there be no eternal life, still the enjoyment of spiritual thoughts as ideals is keener and makes a man happier, whilst the foolery of materialism leads to competition and undue ambition and ultimate death, individual and national' (6.391).

A person is deemed *religious* when seen doing things that are considered religious, such as visiting places of worship, praying, meditating, and studying sacred texts. This is why, in popular usage, *religion* is more a matter of 'doing' than 'being'. Albert Einstein said: 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'⁷ He actually clarified this later in his book *Out of My Later Years*⁸ by pointing out that scientific method can teach us nothing beyond how



facts are related to or conditioned by each other. This shows us 'what is' in a given phenomenon but certainly not 'what should be'. Alexis Carrel, the Nobel laureate in physiology of medicine in 1912 said 'Prayer is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the so-called "laws of nature"; the occasions on which prayer has dramatically done this have been termed "miracles".'⁹ He also said 'Mysticism is splendidly generous. It brings to man the fulfilment of his highest desires, inner strength, spiritual light, divine love, ineffable peace. Religious intuition is as real as aesthetic inspiration. Through the contemplation of superhuman beauty mystics and poets may reach the ultimate truth.'¹⁰ Experimental observation is common both in science and religion or spirituality. However, spirituality is primarily concerned with realisation and facilitates interior structural development.

Spirituality is a search for super-sensuous truth with a strong moral and ethical base. Organised religion forms only the outer gateway, starting with faith and is limited to rituals like austerity, fasting, chanting, and prayer, leading to the seclusion of mind. Bridging the gap between 'being' and 'doing' is a fruitful spiritual discipline. While spirituality is neutral and without any baggage, the present-day religion is burdened with baggage. Spirituality is not bound in any organisational structure. It appears free from rules, dogmas, and disciplines imposed from outside. Spirituality, unlike rituals, is not an abstract external structure imposed upon one's life. Life without spirituality is incomplete, unsatisfactory, and unfulfilled. Nature acts like an escalator—it takes us up through various experiences to make us mature. Such experiences can transform a

person's whole life and enable one to lead a noble life of service to humanity, if based on moral and ethical foundations. It is this transforming power of personal experiences that distinguishes spirituality from mere conformity to religious customs. So, spirituality is a way of developing a holistic way of living, surpassing body and mind leading to a mature, balanced life and integrating the personality. It is turning away from a 'having mode' of life to a 'being mode' of life. Spiritual energy is always flowing relentlessly through nature; it is not the logical brain but the heart that is the gateway for capturing a glimpse of this energy when the mind is quiet and purified. One has to learn to see the supreme spirit shining in all living beings. Marvellous modern developments for extracting nature's power, such as atomic energy, laser, and space travel, have provided immense benefits in life, but their misuse, on the other hand, could lead to another world war. A thoughtful person might learn much of God's wisdom and goodness amidst the solitude of nature. So let us make ourselves one with nature and we shall hear what it has to say to us. This happened to the Avadhuta, whom the Mahabharata describes as one who could find the inner meaning of every event in nature that he encountered. This divine power is essentially neutral so it is up to the owner to visualise and utilise it. The best utilisation of this natural power should be through our heart and not by the logical brain, which can be demonic or evil as well as good. That is why the great spiritual teachers of the ages advised that our lifelong sadhana should be tolerance, acceptance, and realisation.

Hindu scriptures dictate that one must have acquired four desirable qualities called *sadhana chatushtaya* before being capable to accept or learn spiritual knowledge. Spiritual exercises make the mind receptive to higher knowledge. This is similar to acquiring any empirical

knowledge; one must be prepared to learn that subject. The difference between empirical and spiritual knowledge is that the latter is subjective, while the former is objective. That is why the expressions of realisations of spiritual masters are different in different traditions, while scientific truth being objective remains the same irrespective of time and country. The requisite qualities are: discrimination of real and unreal; renunciation of all enjoyments, here and hereafter; the sixfold mental disciplines of mental tranquillity, self-control, forbearance, withdrawal of sense organs, faith, and concentration; and intense desire for liberation. When one is perfectly qualified in *para vidya*, higher knowledge, the ego vanishes like the salt doll dropped into the sea, the saltiness remains but not the form or the ego, as was often cited by Sri Ramakrishna.

In the language of the Vedanta scriptures, a firm spiritual experience requires *shravana*, observation by sense organs; *manana*, thinking over that, followed by *nididhyasana*, visualising the fact through the heart. In common terms these are called experience, moral perfection, and psychological transformation. Bhakti literature also talks of three stages: sadhana, surrender, and finally, acceptance. The preliminary stage is attraction. Sri Ramakrishna dictates that the intensity of this attraction is of these three kinds of attraction combined: the attachment of a rich man to his wealth, the affection of a mother for her child, and a devoted wife's attraction to her husband.

The doctrine of karma establishes certainty in this world of action; the effects of actions are bound to come in this life or in a later life. Also, whatever is within space, time, and causality must pass away and cannot be eternal. But in spirituality there exists no such certainty. It is neither law-bound nor entirely lawless; there remains a small margin of latitude, similar to what is elaborated in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle of

quantum physics where the laws of causality do not apply. In the objective world one is certain to get results. But in the spiritual world there is no such certainty, though one has to continue one's sadhana, increasing in sensitivity in terms of tolerance and acceptance. However, the final result is determined by probability as is also true for subtle particles in quantum physics. In mathematics and quantum physics, certainty exists when this probability equals one hundred percent,

The transition from causality to non-causality involves a straightforward logic. The law of causality says that the amount of results that one gets is equivalent to the extent of effort one has spent, no more, no less. This has been dictated in the doctrines of karma and reincarnation. The same is true in spiritual practice as well. If a person does not practise enough sadhana, including the purification of the mind, there is no likelihood of progress. The difference here is that spirituality is a subjective affair, not directly quantifiable as is the more objective worldly action. Further this is not limited to one's life but continues through life after life, so the effects are cumulative, and so are the samskaras, accumulated tendencies. Morality and ethics are the conditions for spirituality. There cannot be any spiritual light in the impure soul as Swamiji said in *Bhakti Yoga*.¹¹ Once you have attained that quality the result is bound to come. He also said: 'It is a mysterious law of nature that as soon as the field is ready the seed must come' (4.22).

Only a person whose intellect is sufficiently purified and developed so as to reflect the Universal Mind is capable of predicting results with certainty. The mind of a person who has acquired perfection in this virtue becomes like a mirror reflecting the Divine Mind, in which the past, present, and future can be seen. One who has developed truthfulness to such a high degree has gained the ability to weigh every word

before speaking and to speak deliberately and intentionally. This is clearly exemplified in the following quote of *Vidura Niti* in the Mahabharata: 'There is no doubt that one's objects meet with success in proportion to the attention he directs to righteousness and morality.'¹² This is also the doctrine of karma, for as much as the work is established in honesty and morality that much result would be achieved. The crucial question is how much and as this is not objectively quantifiable, it is a matter of probability.

Jesus said: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'¹³ Quantum physics talks of probability or chance. As long as there is self or individuality as 'quantum' there is bound to be imperfection in human actions, and the results remain in the realm of probability or chance; only in perfection there is certainty. To increase this probability one has to decrease the 'I'-ness which, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, is the transformation from unripe 'I' to ripe 'I'. The more egoism surges up, the less is the opportunity for the divinity within to express itself. The threefold vanities of 'I'-ness are: fame, power, and honour. If the level of morality reaches supreme perfection, then realisation is sure to come, hence there is certainty at this level. Since sadhana is a subjective affair, there is no measuring instrument to judge the extent of individuality remaining, and the result is therefore usually only at the level of probability. However, when the cosmic 'I' or ripe 'I' is established the realisation is then certain. The difference in result is due to lack of sincerity and intensity that leads only to a probability, as stated in the previous section.

Science creates a deterministic world trying to encompass truth within the limits of human reason. But reason is not the fit instrument for knowing the whole truth. Human beings want to go beyond reason. The words of Albert Einstein on the limitations of the human condition and

the way to overcome them, are not only pertinent for both scientific and spiritual perspectives, but also seem to indicate a way towards a more inclusive and thus compassionate existence:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The striving to free oneself from this delusion is the one issue of true religion. Not to nourish the delusion but to try to overcome it is the way to reach the attainable measure of peace of mind.¹⁴

The same was said by Max Planck: 'Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.'¹⁵ How can the knower know herself or himself? This is similar to Sri Ramakrishna's example of a salt doll trying to measure the depth of the ocean.

The Ultimate Non-dual Experience

Every subject whether in the domains of the sciences or the arts, deals with the knower, *jnani*, known, *jneya*, and knowledge, *jnana*. This is the threefold aspect of knowledge. Even in experimental sciences, there is a process of experiment, observation, inference, and conclusion. In the scientific quest the observer is by and large separate from the observed. There is not much interaction between the observer and the observed. But this is not the case in the quantum world.

This interaction has been nicely illustrated by Swamiji. He narrated to the famous French singer and actress Emma Calve, a story when she was under deep depression.

One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean. When it found itself there, it began to weep and complain just as you are doing. The great ocean laughed at the drop of water. 'Why do

you weep?’ it asked. ‘I do not understand. When you join me, you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me, you have only rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, a little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth.’¹⁶

This is illustrated in the Gita, by the total unidentifiable river water terminating at the vast unfathomable ocean, which is unaffected though being ever filled in.¹⁷

Rationality in Spiritual Development

Spiritual progress is psychological progress. This progress does not take place in a straight line or an ever increasing quantity of unmixed pleasure or comfort. Among those who strive for perfection only a few may finally succeed in acquiring the true knowledge of the spiritual Reality underlying all existence. This is very rare on earth as said in the Gita (7.3).

This signifies that one has to increase one’s receptivity to any knowledge. This works in two ways: first, from the positive approach, one must increase one’s ability to accept knowledge by improving one’s sense of perception. Second, one has to reduce the negative qualities opposing this acceptability. A common example from electronics illustrates this: in order for an amplifier to work, an increase in amplification and reduction of noise level are needed. The figure of merit or the quality is determined by increasing this ratio of the signal level to the noise level.

Some of the essential qualities for spiritual development are discussed below.

Sadhu Sanga, Holy Company

Purity is the bedrock of spiritual life, being the greatest spiritual force. It manifests itself through deed, word, thought, will, and disposition.

Purity of deed is straightforwardness in action. Pure words do not admit double meaning or offensiveness. The purpose of self-purification is to release the higher tendency from the thralldom of the lower.

One has to guard purity as once it is lost it cannot be regained. A pure person has an effortless immediate perception of the right way. Just as an ingenious person sees ingenuity everywhere, a pure person sees simplicity and absence of ulterior motive everywhere. The pure person exerts redemptive power. That is why all religions recommend the company of the holy as the greatest purifying agent.

Holiness is the goal of spirituality. It is the highest manifestation of the divine spirit. Choosing holy company, *sat-sanga*, is essential for the spiritual seeker. In *Vivekachudamani*, Acharya Shankara says that three things are rare: human birth, longing for liberation, and holy company.¹⁸ Holy company affects us in several ways. It is like the coolness one feels as one nears a big lake, sea, or mountain. One may experience a strange feeling of harmony and peace. This harmony and tranquillity spread like an invisible aura in a temple or religious place. The holy vibrations created rouse the dormant fund of noble impressions and they dominate over impure impressions.

The impure mind has an evil influence; the pure mind has an influence for good. Persons with pure character can transmit to the degree of their own purity. One cannot clean a dirty cloth in dirty water.

As heat, electric, or magnetic energy is inducted when similar material is brought near to it, so also when one comes in contact with a good or bad person, one is affected by their good or bad qualities. Their virtues act on us through induction or conduction and greatest care should be on the choice of companion.

The Law of Silence

Silence of mind is a spiritual discipline. The first instruction to a yogi is to stop the *vrittis* arising in the mind. Mind is the storehouse of all, both in the conscious and in the subconscious plane. Speaking is to be restricted to a minimum, and to only pleasant and truthful words. Talking too much increases the likelihood of speaking more untruths. Christ said: 'Do not use vain words.'¹⁹ Our book of life is open, struggling to come out. Silence recharges the battery. Spirituality comes out in silence; sometimes external world acts as inspiration. Swamiji used to say, 'all knowledge is within,'²⁰ struggling to come out. A teacher can only help to remove the obstructions. A common saying on acquiring knowledge is that a teacher teaches only a quarter, books another quarter, a third quarter is taught by the environment, while the rest comes in time from silence within. One relevant quote from a pioneer scientist Francis Bacon of the sixteenth century is: 'Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.'²¹ Self-control is the way to self-knowledge. Our wisdom is wasted looking at the world outside. The wise, wanting to tap inner knowledge, shut off all the sense organs from the outside world, not simply restricting the tongue, but mind as well, although the silence of mind is harder to achieve than the silence of the tongue.

Artists and scientists conceive an idea in solitude. A seed germinates in the silence of mother earth. Great power is released in silence. Out of the three powers—destructive, creative, and healing—the artist, scientist, and seed germination belong to the middle category of creative power. This is also true of curdling. The pot in which milk is set for curdling should not be moved. Curd is materialised in silence when the lattice is formed. Thus, one has to keep silent and free oneself from all external disturbances if

one is to do some creative work. Shankara said: 'The first steps to *yoga* are control of speech.'²² The present century is the age of noise. Noise irritates our nerves and retards convalescence. The healing power is within ourselves, which no medicines can match. Physical maladies in many cases are related to the sickness of mind. Silence soothes the nerves and hence heals the mind. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that 'it is most necessary to go into solitude now and then and think of God,'²³ particularly for spiritual aspirants.

The Law of Purity

Spiritual life is a steady process of purification. The Gita identified this purity as austerity, *tapasya*.²⁴ Thus, it emphasises the threefold austerity performed through the body, speech, and mind. This threefold austerity practised with great faith by those who desire no fruit and are steadfast, is said to be *sattvic*. Speech that causes no worry, fear, and is also truthful and agreeable to hear and beneficial—resulting in good—and also study of the Vedas, are said to be verbal austerity, austerity performed through speech. Mental austerity is serenity of mind, kindness, silence, self-control, and purity of heart.

The Law of Resonance

In spiritual practice one is often advised to be rational and harmonious in thinking, feeling, talking, and action. Unless one brings these into harmony there cannot be any progress even in worldly matters, and spiritual progress is even less likely to occur. Sri Ramakrishna often referred to this as tuning the mouth with the thinking as an essential condition in spiritual growth, and also in worldly action. The inner world must coincide with world outside if one is aiming for spiritual life. They are normally different for all of us. It is impossible to know one's inner world by watching her or him, not even living together

for years. Only for a spiritual person do these two worlds coincide. They are also the same for a child and for an insane person. That is why Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'In the Kaliyuga one does not hear the voice of God, it is said, except through the mouth of a child or a madman or some such person.'²⁵ Christ said: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'²⁶ Our education teaches us how to behave in the external world but says nothing of our internal world. The law of resonance in science explains that when any external system works in accord with its natural tendency, the desired effect is maximally enhanced. In spiritual practice, it is through withdrawal of attachment, the idea of doer-ship, and the idea of enjoyer-ship, that the action can be made perfect. The presence of any one or two of these in action introduces the doctrines of karma and reincarnation. That is why the Gita names the state of being devoid of these three qualities as *mukta-sanga*, devoid of attachment, and states that under this condition any action is bound to be perfect.²⁷ A sattvic agent is free from attachment, ardent longing; is non-egotistic; not given to boasting; has fortitude, steadiness, enthusiasm, zeal; and possessed of these and is unaffected, that is, free from joy and despondency at the success or failure of a work that was undertaken.

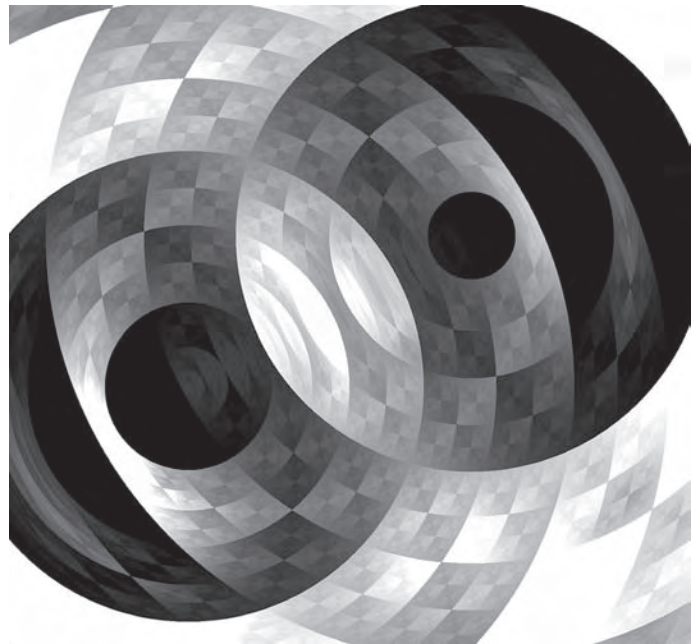
Science of Yoga

The divine power is essentially neutral. Though divinity is everywhere, the functioning of this neutral power depends upon our psycho-physical constitution. The different forms of the body-mind complex explain the varieties in human behaviour, such as criminal misdeeds, and the saints and sinners. The power of the spirit comes when we are established in certain virtues and are free from the thirst for enjoying objects of

senses: On being firmly established in non-violence, the abandonment of hostility occurs in one's presence.²⁸ On being established in truthfulness, one gets the power of attaining for oneself and others, the fruits of work without the work (2.36). On being firmly established in non-stealing, all precious things wait to serve that one (2.37). By being firmly established in continence, one gains spiritual energy (2.38). On being established in non-possessiveness there is manifested correct perception regarding birth (2.39). From purification there comes a disgust for one's own body and thereby a lack of desire to associate with others (2.40).

Conclusion

When one is established in spiritual regulation as habit, it works as an instinct. It is said: '*Dharma eva hato hanti dharma rakshati rakshitah*'; one who destroys dharma is destroyed by dharma, one who protects dharma is protected by dharma.'²⁹ Justice if violated, it destroys, justice if preserved, it preserves; therefore justice must not be violated, lest violated justice destroy us. The Gita says: '*Yogakshemam Vahamyaham*'; God ensures the safety and well-being of his devotees.'³⁰ A person first follows dharma, but at the end dharma follows her or him.



In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* it is said: 'On being established in realism, his actions serve as a basis for results' (2.36). In the Mahabharata the *Vidura Niti* says: 'The gods do not protect men, taking up clubs in their hands after the manner of herdsmen; unto those, however, they wish to protect, they grant intelligence [*prajna*].'³¹ This *prajna* is not simply judging right or wrong through intelligence. God manifests in the heart as one goes on calling on God with utmost sincerity. Many people have intelligence but not *prajna*.

On returning to our original question of acquiring holistic knowledge for our ultimate goal of liberation or moksha, one is required to get rid of the bondage of nature. This bondage is in the form of the three qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas, which are inbuilt in everything in the universe, including human beings.

It is just like the gravitational force attached to everything on earth. In science we talk of escape velocity by which one is required to throw an object beyond the reach of earth's gravitational attraction. In spirituality, as it has been suggested, if we work without any attachment, idea of doership, and idea of enjoyer-ship, no new bondage would come. But what about those tendencies that have been previously acquired and that we are born with in this life, the samskaras? And two more bonds are there as maya—illusion and distraction. These three forms of bondage are the most subtle forces that continue to cause trouble even if one is engaged in unselfish action. As in science too, even after getting rid of earth's gravitational force it has to overcome the force of solar system and again that of the universe! ☞

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Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

YOU SAY FINALLY: 'Causality does not exist. It is an imagination.' That is the conclusion a scientist too will come to in dealing with the behaviour of subatomic particles. They are all uncaused, indeterminate. That is the language they have used. While discussing causal relation, so many schools are discussed here, of various believers in causality. When you say that a tree has come from the seed, don't you believe in causality? A tree has come from the seed. That is an illustration. That itself is waiting to be proved, whether there is causality implied there. As an illustration itself it is to be proved. Don't use it as an illustration, when it is to be questioned. Modern scientists are very fond of these discussions.

Cause is supposed to be antecedent and effect is the subsequent.

The ignorance regarding the antecedence and the subsequence of the cause and the effect clearly proves the absence of evolution or creation. If the effect (*Dharma*, i.e., the *Jiva*) has really been produced from a cause, then why can you not point out the antecedent cause? ... The fact of birth can be said to be established if the order of the succession of cause and effect be established. In the absence of such order there cannot be any birth or evolution.¹⁰⁰

This is exactly what you have learnt in the principle of indeterminacy. You can't predict the behaviour of an electron. Naturally you cannot predict the behaviour of the whole world, only because you will never know its position, momentum correctly. No prediction is possible.

'Nothing, whatsoever, is born either of itself or of another. Nothing is ever produced whether it be being or non-being or both being and non-being. ... That which is without beginning is necessarily free from birth' (234-6). Beginningless is birthless. *Adirna vidyate yasya tasya hyadirna vidyate*. Then one of the Buddhist schools' thought is presented.

'Subjective knowledge must have an objective cause; otherwise both must be non-existent. For this reason as well as that of the experience of pain, the existence of external objects, accepted by other thinkers, should be admitted' (237). That is, many people believe in the existence of the external objects. The views of the dualists are given here regarding the reality of the external objects. As you say you dream, you assign it to the waking state experience as the cause. This external is the cause of the internal.

'From the point of view of logical reason a cause for the subjective impression must be assigned. But from the standpoint of the highest Reality or the true nature of things, we find that the (so-called) cause (of the subjective impression) is, after all, no cause' (239). It is the same mind in the dream. Where is causality there? That is how it is said: '*Bhutadarshanat*; from the true nature of the thing.'

'The mind is not related to the (external) objects. Nor are the ideas which appear as the external objects, reflections upon the mind. It is so because the objects are non-existent and the ideas (which appear as external objects) are not separate from the mind' (242). Mind is just the ideas.

‘The mind does not enter into any causal relation in any of the three periods of time [past, present, future]. How can the mind be ever subject to delusion, as there is no cause for any such delusion?’ (243). All this is not from normal relative experience. In relative experience all this is there. When you investigate, they break down.

‘Therefore neither the mind nor the objects perceived by the mind are ever born. [That you can see in dream also.] Those who perceive such birth may as well discover the foot-prints (of the birds) in the sky’ (244). That is one of the famous expressions in Vedanta. *Khe vai pashyanti te padam*. The Buddhist philosophers are referred to in this, *Vijnanavadins*. The birth of the mind, they always say. We don’t believe in the birth of the mind.

‘It is never possible for a thing to be other than what it is’ (246). That is again established. ‘If the world be admitted to be beginningless (as some disputants assert), then it cannot be non-eternal. *Mokṣa* or liberation cannot have a beginning and be eternal’ (247). Here the criterion of reality is mentioned once again. What is unreal, what is real?

‘That which is non-existent at the beginning and in the end, is necessarily so (non existent) in the middle. The objects we see are illusions; still they are regarded as if real’ (248). Yesterday it was not there, tomorrow it won’t be there. Today it is there, that is unreality itself. But you may say that it has utility and it helps us in utilitarian purposes.

‘The serving of some purpose by them (*i.e.*, the objects of waking experience) is contradicted in the dream. Therefore they are doubtlessly recognised to be illusory (by the wise) on account of their having a beginning and an end’ (249). All these arguments are of that nature.

‘All objects cognised in dream are unreal, because they are seen within the body’ (250). How

can there be the vision of creatures with this narrow space here?

‘It is not possible for a dreamer to go out in order to experience the (dream) objects on account of the discrepancy of the time involved in such journey’ (250). He was just in the bed when he was dreaming, going here and there.

‘The dreamer on being awake, realises as illusory all the conversation he had with friends etc., during the dream state. Further, he does not possess, in the waking state, anything which he had acquired in dream’ (251). He acquired a million dollars, wake up, all gone. Nothing is there.

‘The body active in dream is unreal as the other body, quite distinct from it, is perceived. Like the body, everything, cognised by the mind is unreal’ (252). Waking experiences are as unreal as the dream experiences.

‘All these are known as unborn, causeless, as their creation or evolution cannot be established as a fact. It is ever impossible for the unreal to be born of the real’ (254). Why do people take it as real?

‘Being deeply impressed with the (reality of the) unreal objects which a man sees in the waking state, he sees those very things in dream as well. Moreover the unreal objects cognised in the dream are not seen again in the waking state’ (255). One sublates the other, contradicts the other.

‘The unreal cannot have the unreal as its cause, nor can the real be produced from the unreal. The real cannot be the cause of the real. And it is much more impossible for the real to be the cause of the unreal’ (256). Four statements are there: real causing real, unreal causing unreal, real causing the unreal, unreal causing the real—four categories. This cannot be. No causal relation from the point of view of the Ultimate Truth.

‘As one in the waking state, through false knowledge, handles, as real, objects whose nature

cannot be described, similarly, in dream also, one perceives, through false knowledge, objects whose existence is possible in that condition alone' (257).

Why is it that causality is introduced at all in all the scriptures? Everyday life cannot go on without causality. Every action that you do is expected to give some result. 'Wise men support causality only for the sake of those who, being afraid of absolute non-manifestation (of things), stick to the (apparent) reality of (external) objects on account of their perception (of such objects) and their faith in religious observances' (258). We have attachment to these things. We need it. So, wise people support it: 'Alright. Go on. Have belief in causality.'

'Students who practise disciplines in accordance with Vedanta Philosophy will, without such belief of causality, spontaneously get the knowledge of Self, unborn and non-dual' (259). Statements such as statements about creation in the Shruti are meant to help us to understand the higher Reality. They have only an educative value. Advaita philosophers have supported causality from this point of view. For those who have no discrimination in order to endow them with faith, it is said: 'Alright. Believe in causality.' Just like classical physics, believe in it. Day-to-day life cannot go on on the basis of quantum and relativity, impossible. In a space-time continuum, how can you conduct your life? Alright, believe in classical physics; conduct your day-to-day life, Vedanta says the same.

'Those who, being afraid of the truth of absolute non-manifestation, and also on account of their perception of (of phenomenal objects), do not admit *Ajāti* (absolute non-creation), are not much affected by the evil consequent on the belief in causality. The evil effect, if any, is rather insignificant' (260). No evil consequence will come to them with their belief in causality. Even if the evil effect is there you will feel rather

insignificant provided you move on towards the real truth, which is non-causality. Through causality you go to non causality. 'This shows the catholicity of Advaita Vedanta' (ibid.).

'As an elephant conjured up by the magician, on account of its being perceived and also on account of its answering to the behaviours (of a real animal), is said to exist, so also are objects said to exist, on account of their being perceived and also on account of their answering to our dealings with them. (In truth, the objects of sense perception are as unreal as the magician's elephant)' (261).

'Consciousness which appears to be born or to move or to take the form of matter is really ever unborn, immovable and free from the character of materiality; it is all peace and non-dual' (262). *Jatyabhasam chalabhasam vastvabhasam tathaiva cha, ajachalamavastutvam vijñanam shantam advayam*. *Shantam* means peace, *advayam* means non-dual. The realm of consciousness is *shantam, advayam*. There is no movement at all; it has no change, nothing.

'Thus the mind is never subject to birth or change. All beings are, thus, free from the [very] birth [in their true nature]. Those who know (the truth) are never subject to false knowledge' (263).

'As a fire-brand, when set in motion, appears as straight, crooked, etc., so also Consciousness, when set in motion, appears as the perceiver, the perceived, and the like' (264). Just put lot of cotton, tie up in a wheel, set fire and make the wheel move—continuous flame you will see. Actually it is not continuous but movement makes it continuous. Even a fan, when it works, you feel it is continuous. *Jñanam, jñata, jñeya*—knowledge, knower, known. Consciousness split up into all these three categories, really it is not there, it is all one infinite current or wave or background field of consciousness. 'There is no motion in Consciousness. It only appears to be moving. This appearance is due to *Avidyā* or ignorance.

No motion is possible in Consciousness which is ever immovable. It is already been stated that Consciousness is unborn and immovable' (ibid.).

'As the fire-brand, when not in motion, is free from all appearances and remains changeless, similarly, Consciousness, when not in motion (imaginary action), is free from all appearances and remains changeless' (ibid.). If a fire-brand be moved swiftly, it makes a circle, a straight line, or a crooked line according to the movement. When the fire-brand is moved, it does not really make a figure. In reality, there is only a point which appears as various figures, only one point at a time. But it gives an impression.

'The fire-brand, when at rest, has no figure, as it is a point only. Even when moved, the fire-brand is really, nothing but a point. It only appears as a circle or straight line. Consciousness always, remains what it is. ... When the fire-brand is in motion, the appearances (that are seen in it) do not come from elsewhere. When the fire-brand is not moved, the appearances do not go elsewhere from the motionless fire-brand. Further, the appearances, when the fire-brand is not moved, do not enter into the fire-brand itself' (265). All appearances are like that.

This also applies to Consciousness on account of the similarity of appearances (in both the cases). ... When Consciousness is associated with the idea of activity (as in the dream and waking states), the appearances (that are seen in it) do not come from elsewhere. When Consciousness is inactive (as in deep sleep) appearances do not go elsewhere from the inactive Consciousness. Further, appearances do not enter into it. The appearances do not emerge from Consciousness because they are not of the nature of a substance. These are always beyond our comprehension on account of their not being subject to the relation of cause and effect (266-7).

The whole subject is causality. 'Substance may

be the cause of another substance. That which is not substance may be the cause of another which is not substance. But the *Jīvas* (or beings) cannot be possibly anything like substance or other than substance' (268). You don't treat jiva as a substance.

'Thus (external) appearances (objects) are not caused by the mind nor is the mind produced by them. Hence men of discrimination hold the principle of the absolute non-evolution or negation of causality' (269). This is *Alatashanti*. You have to get *shanti* of that thing; it makes you *ashanti*. Logic makes you *ashanti*, means peaceless. So, you must silence this logic. Stop that hurling firebrand. Attachment to the belief in causality. You see, in dream, you run after something, which runs after something else—a series of causalities and the whole thing is an illusion. Only mind was there.

As long as a man persists in the belief in causality he will find the working of cause and effect. But when attachment to causality vanishes, cause and effect become non-existent. ... This *Kārikā* tells us that the chief duty of the student is to analyse the law of causality and find its illusory nature. The attainment of true knowledge solely depends upon this understanding of the causal law. ... As long as there is faith in causality, the (endless) chain of birth and death will be there. When that faith is destroyed (by knowledge) birth and death become non-existent (270).

It is causality that makes us born, die again. The Atman is beyond cause. So there is neither birth nor death in that realisation.

All this is seen to be born on account of the illusion of experience (due to *Avidyā*); therefore nothing is permanent. All, again, as one with the Ultimate Reality is unborn, causeless. And therefore there is nothing like destruction. ... Those *Jīvas* (entities) or beings are said to be born. But that birth which is never possible from the standpoint of Reality. Their birth

is like that of an illusory object. That illusion, again, is non-existent. ... The illusory sprout comes forth from the illusory seed. This illusory sprout is neither permanent nor destructible. The same applies to all *Jīvas* (271–3).

In India certain jugglers produce from illusory seeds, illusory trees full of illusory fruits. They just give you a fruit from the tree. Quickly, a small mango plant is shown. It grows, then fruits come, and they give you a fruit. You eat it. You find it tasteful and then, finally the whole thing goes away. That is one of the juggleries: illusory fruit in an illusory tree.

They do it. That is amazing. That is the beauty of magic, it is amazing. Swamiji saw it in Hyderabad. A man produced beautiful roses with dew on them just from the air. Just like that! I don't want an illusory mango. I want a real mango! Some control of the elements may be there. That man was not a mere magician, Swamiji himself said. This is not mere sleight of hand or trick. He has some siddhi, yogic power. That's what he himself says there, in 'The Powers of the Mind'. In that lecture, you find this.¹⁰¹

'The epithets of permanence or impermanence cannot be applied to unborn *Jīvas* [uncaused jivas]. That which is indescribable by words cannot be discriminated (as real or unreal).'¹⁰² 'Atman is dead'—it does not affect the Atman. It is only a word. 'Atman is born'—it does not affect it. In the second chapter of the Gita, you find all these. This Atman is not born nor does it die—like that you will find. It is always indestructible, it is not born—there is no causality in the Atman.

'As in dream, the mind is seen to act through *Māyā* manifesting the appearance of duality, so also in the waking state the mind is seen to act, through *Māyā*, producing the appearance of duality. There is no doubt that the mind which is, in fact, non-dual, appears as dual in dream;

in like manner, undoubtedly, the waking state, which is non-dual, appears as dual. ... The whole variety of *Jīvas*, born of eggs, moisture, etc' (275).

There are four types of beings in the world according to the Sanskrit classification. First, those beings that are born of eggs, second, through moisture all sorts of insects are born. So many times, whenever there is rainfall, something comes. So, they call it born of moisture. Then, those born of placenta are called the human beings and mammals. The last one is that which splits the soil, and comes out, like plants. These four types of beings are 'always seen by the dreamer when he goes about (in his dream) in all ten directions [yet they] (have no existence apart from the mind of the dreamer)' (ibid.).

'These (beings) which are objects of the mind of the dreamer have no existence apart from his mind. Similarly, this mind of the dreamer is admitted to be the object of perception of the dreamer only. (Therefore the mind of the dreamer is not separate from the dreamer himself). ... The whole variety of *Jīvas*, born of eggs, moisture, etc., always seen by the waking man when he goes about (in his waking condition,) in all ten directions, is only the object of the mind of the waking man' (276–7).

The same thing applies to all the states. 'Both (the mind and the *Jīva*) are objects of perception to each other. Which then can be said to exist independent of the other? (The reply of the wise is in the negative). Both are devoid of the marks by which they could be distinguished. For, either can be cognized only through the other' (278). The *jīva* and the mind. The same thing is repeated in the next verse.

'As the dream-*Jīva* comes into being and disappears, so also all *Jīvas* (perceived in the waking condition) appear and disappear. As the magician's *Jīva* comes into being and passes away, so also all *Jīvas* (perceived in the waking

condition) appear and disappear. As the artificial *Jīva* (brought into existence by incantation, medicinal herb, etc.) comes into being and passes away, so also all the *Jīvas* (perceived in the waking condition) appear and disappear' (279). They also come and go away, magician's *jīva*.

Therefore, no 'kind of *Jīva* is ever born nor is there any cause for any such birth. The Ultimate Truth is that nothing whatsoever is born' or is subject to causality (280). *Etat-taduttamam satyam*; this is the Supreme Truth. That nothing is born; causality is a myth. If causality is not there, there is no birth, there is no death.

'The whole world of duality', says Shankara 'consisting of the subject and the object is, verily, an act of the mind' (281). So I say, the consciousness field is true. Subject pole and object pole are only configurations of the field of consciousness. That language we use. 'On account of the absence of relation (with any object), the mind is declared as eternal and unattached' (ibid.). This is exactly the true nature of the mind. This is what you will find in Zen Buddhism. Constantly it is about this mind. All talk is about this mind. Mind non-caused is of this nature. The rest is all imagination.

'The *Śruti* also says, "The *Puruṣa* is always free from relation [attachment]". That which perceives objects outside of it, is related to such objects. But the mind, having no such external object, is free from all relations. ... That which exists on the strength of the illusory experiences does not, really speaking, exist. ... *Ātman* is called unborn (*Aja*) from the standpoint of the illusory empirical experiences' (281-3). There is no need to say *Ātman* is *aja*. From the point of view of the illusory experiences of cause and effect, we simply say that the *Ātman* is causeless. But that statement itself is not necessary from the *Ātman* point of view. There is no duality corresponding to such belief. 'It is, truly speaking,

not even unborn. That unborn *Ātman* appears to be born from the standpoint of belief of the other schools of thought' (283). Dualists, the Samkhya School, and others.

'Man has mere persistent belief in the reality of the unreal (which is duality)' (284). That is what science pricks by reducing all these duality into a unity. Why did Einstein work for a Unified Field Theory? Even regarding the external world, everything is reduced to a unity by the course of knowledge. Common sense says, everything is separate. But if you include the subject also then the Vedantic conclusion comes. There is only one pure consciousness, infinite and non-dual. In it you can see all this variety; all within it. Bubbles, waves—all acting in the sea as the bottom. It is all the sea, you will see bubbles, and you will see waves, so many things are there. All is only sea. That knowledge is knowledge.

'This (*i.e.*, the realisation of Brahman) is the humility natural to the *Brāhmaṇas*' (294). When a man realises this truth, he becomes humble. No arrogance and pride can ever come. Why? He is one with all. The same *Ātman* is in all. What is there to be proud? And this humility comes to you naturally. Not because apparently, 'Oh! I am sorry'—that kind of humility. That is all created, what you call artificial. This is natural. The mind is always bent, just bent towards the reality that is there, around him, in him. No arrogance can ever come in this state. This Brahman is the natural humility of the wise man. The other is artificial humility. In India we have plenty of artificial humility because of pseudo-religious ideas. 'I am nothing; I am nothing.' That fellow is full of ego! He says: 'I am nothing; I am nothing.' There is no meaning in it. Better be somebody. As Swamiji said, by saying that you are nothing, you are nothing, you have become really nothing. Be something, he will say. Be something and then renounce. That is real humility.

This language is wonderful. *Vipranam vinayo hyesha*. *Vinaya* means humility. According to the Sanskrit tradition, true knowledge must make you humble. *Vidya dadati vinayam*; *vidya* gives you *vinayam*. *Vidya* means knowledge. When the corn is unripe it stands erect and when it is ripe it gently bends down. Wheat corn, rice corn—all are like this. That is ripe knowledge. The other is unripe: ‘Don’t you know who I am?’ That is called pride, arrogance. So this is the *vinaya* of the *vipra*. *Vipranam vinayo hyesha*. What does ‘this’ mean? ‘This’ is Brahman. Then, *shamah prakrita uchyate*. That kind of control of the mind, *shama*, comes to you naturally, without struggling with this mind. Through the knowledge of Brahman the mind becomes tranquil, automatically. That is spontaneous and natural and they are also containing their self, sense-organs control naturally, spontaneously. They don’t pull the sense-organs to control, naturally they are controlled. When the knowledge of the Atman comes, these are natural. They don’t try to fight with their sense-organs, nothing. No artificial method.

‘Their tranquillity (of mind) is also declared to be spontaneous (by men of discrimination). They are said to have attained to the state of sense-control (not through any artificial method as it comes quite natural to them). He who thus realises Brahman which is all-peace, himself becomes peaceful and tranquil’ (294–5). Brahman is all peace; you realise it, you become peaceful. Peaceful people can create a peaceful world. That is a simple teaching. Unless you are at peace with yourself, you cannot create a peaceful world. I quote that Joshua Oldfield’s lecture in London, on war and internationalism, just before the Second World War: ‘More wars are caused by bad-tempered people seeking to discuss peace measures than by good-tempered people seeking to discuss war measures.’ Here the description

is about those good-tempered people. Here is a man who has attained peace.

‘The humility of the *Brāhmaṇas* which is due to their realisation of their identity with the Self, is quite natural’ (295). In Sri Ramakrishna you can see, natural like a child of five. Nothing artificial there, just a child of five. Children are generally very natural, spontaneous.

The tranquillity (of the mind which the Knowers of Brahman enjoy) is also natural and not induced by any artificial means. Having realised Brahman which is, by nature, all-peace the wise man attains to peace which is the characteristic of Brahman. That is to say, he becomes identical with Brahman. ... (*Vedānta*) recognises the ordinary (empirical) state of waking in which duality, consisting of objects and the ideas of he coming in contact with them, is known. It further recognises another more subtle state (*i.e.*, the dream common to all) in which is experienced duality, consisting of the idea of coming in contact with the objects, though such objects do not exist (295–6).

Vedanta recognises ordinary experiences. *Savastu sopalambham cha dvayam laukikamishyate*.

Shankara says: ‘We have so far, come to the following conclusions: The theories of mere disputants contradicting one another are the causes of our existence in the relative (*Sarīsāra*) world’ (296). We are all in this contradiction. So much of violence and conflict makes our samsara, world, real to us. If there is peace, we know it is unreal. ‘These theories are characterised by partiality and aversion. Therefore these are merely false’ (*ibid.*). In Advaita there is no partiality or violence or conflict. Untouched by all this, it is true knowledge.

‘There is another state [other than waking and dream] (admitted by the wise) which is free from contact with (external) objects and altogether free from the idea of coming in contact with objects. This state is beyond all empirical

experiences. The wise always describe the three, viz., Knowledge, Knowledge of objects and the Knowable as the Supreme Reality (which is ultimately knowable)' (297). Knowledge, the object of the knowledge, and the knower—they are all supremely one and the same. *Avastu anupalambham cha lokottaramiti smritam*. There is a *loka*, this is *lokottaram*. That is the world, this is transcending the world. Uttara means above. *Lokottaram*. Sensory level and above sensory level. This is world and that is supremely transcending the world. When you sit in meditation you want to go beyond this sensory world. Therefore, you control the senses. The wise always describe the three like that, he says. *Jnanam jneyam cha vijneyam sada buddhaih prakirtitam*. *Buddhai* means the wise people, men like Buddha. They always proclaim the unity of knowledge, knower, and known in the field of consciousness.

A state free from the relationship of subject and the object—is called the highest state, which is beyond all empirical experiences. All empirical experiences consist of the subject-object relationship. This [*lokottara*] state is free from all such relationship and is the seed of future experiences. This is known as the state of deep sleep. That alone is called knowledge which is the realisation of essence, i.e., the Supreme Reality, as well as the means to do so, viz., the analysis of the states of gross experience, subtle experience and the condition beyond all experience. The three states, mentioned above, are the objects of knowledge; for, there cannot be anything knowable besides these three states (298).

There is nothing in the world which is not covered by these three states. Either it must come in the waking or in the dream or in sleep. There is no fourth state in which you can see an object. 'All entities falsely imagined by the different schools of the disputants are included in these three states. That which is to be ultimately known is the truth regarding the Supreme Reality, known

as *Turiya*, i.e., the knowledge of Self, non-dual and unborn. The illumined ones, i.e., those who have seen the Supreme Reality have described these features (topics) ranging from the objects of gross experience to the Supremely Knowable Self' (ibid.). All this range of knowledge—waking, dream, sleep, and the *Turiya*.

'Knowledge and the threefold knowable being known, one after another, the knower possessed of the highest reason [most expansive reason, not the tiny little reason] spontaneously attains to the state of knowledge everywhere and in all things in this very life' (299). That is Vedanta. *Jnane cha trividhe jneye kramena vidite svayam, sarvajnata hi sarvatra bhavatiha mahadhiyah*. *Iha* means in this very life. *Mahadhiyah*, their mind is infinite. *Dhi* means reason, *buddhi*. *Maha* means big, infinite. Our minds are small. Take any sectarian person, the mind is small. 'Jesus is real; Jesus is the only begotten son'—small mind. 'Allah alone is true, cut off the neck of all, everybody', it is small mind. For this big mind, infinite—all limitations are removed. What is the nature of that mind? *Mahadhiyah*. Big mind, it is called. A big nation must have a big mind. If you belong to a great nation, you must have a great mind. Great movements and little minds ill go together. It is an English saying. And here is that big mind, *mahadhiyah*, infinite, expansive. This *buddhi* has become free from all limitations. That is knowledge of Brahman.

And one of the great mothers of India, five thousand years ago, the Pandavas' mother Kunti; she gave a blessing to the emperor of India, who was her son, that is Yudhishtira, when she was going to the forest after the war. Then this is the blessing she gave: 'Go back to the capital; rule this kingdom, along with your brothers but when you do so, *dharme te dhiyatam buddhirmanaste mahadastu cha*; may your mind be established in righteousness and let your heart

be big and great.¹⁰³ Not like a small heart. A mother's blessing on an emperor in India, five thousand years ago. This India is big, but it can become great only when its leaders have great minds, not petty minds. Our people must have a big mind. Take in the whole world, not tiny nationalism, petty little chauvinistic ideas and all that, no. Great minds think alike, next to it little minds also think alike!

This *shloka* is wonderful. Shankara says: 'The word *Jñānam* signifies knowledge by which one grasps the significance of the three states.'¹⁰⁴ Now waking knowledge knows only waking world. Dream knowledge knows only dream world. And in sleep there is no knowledge. But there is another knowledge which knows all the three worlds. What is that knowledge? That is infinite knowledge, unlimited and you are heir to it. Only you don't realise it. You are attached to this body, attached to this little world, so is Vedanta, it looks very reasonable. That this mind can become vaster and vaster. Reason marches into ever greater levels of existence. First is ordinary common sense reason, very limited. It says the earth is flat. That is called common sense reason. Then comes deductive logic reason. Very limited, it only repeats what it begins to say. Repetition of a proposition is called conclusion, in deductive logic. No new knowledge you get. Inductive reason is wider; you get new knowledge. Then beyond that, is philosophical reason, where you bring the subject along with the object. Inductive reason deals only with the objects. When you bring in the subject also, consciousness also, reason breaks all barriers. It becomes infinite. That is the infinite knowledge, which is referred to here. Knowledge becomes infinite.

The word '*Jñeya*' or knowable, signifies the three states which should be known. The first (knowable) consists of the gross state of empirical experience [waking state]. Then comes

the state of subtle experience in which the first state loses itself [dream], *i.e.*, merges. And last comes deep sleep which is beyond all empirical experiences (gross or subtle) which results in the absence of the two previous states, *i.e.*, in which two previous states merge. By the knowledge of these three one after the other, and consequently, by the negation of the three states the *Turiya*, the non-dual, birthless and fearless, which alone is the Supreme Reality, is realised. Thus the knower (possessed of the highest power of discrimination) attains in this very life the state of omniscience which is identical with the knowledge of Self. He is called *Mahādhīh* (ibid.).

Dhi means reason. *Buddhi*. *Maha* means big, unlimited, expansive, *buddhi*. It is a wonderful word. This '*Mahādhīh* or the man of highest intellect as he has understood that which transcends all human experiences' (ibid.). He knows the experienter. We know only bits of experience. The *dhi* that comprehends the self is *mahadhi*, consciousness. 'His omniscience is constant and remains undiminished. For, the knowledge of Self once realised remains as such for ever. This is because the knowledge of the knower of the Supreme Reality does not appear and disappear like that of mere vain disputants' (299–300). That knowledge comes and goes. This is a great *shloka*.

'The four things to be known first are: the thing to be avoided, the objects to be realised, the things to be attended and thoughts to be rendered ineffective. Among these four, the three things, excepting what is to be realised, *viz.*, the Supreme Reality, exist only as imagination' (301).

Except the supreme Reality to be attained, everything is imagination.

This is dealing with normal life. 'I am ignorant, I want to realise objects. I am unfulfilled, I want to realise something for fulfilment.' In that sense. The thing to be realised is the Atman. That alone is the real thing; everything else is mental

imagination and its own process. *Heya*, which is to be avoided; *jneya*, which is to be known; *apya*, which is to be attained; and *pakyani*, which is to be rendered ineffective. We want to sterilise, sterile liquid we say in medical language, we want to sterilise it; these four types. Among these, three things are to be avoided. Atman alone is to be realised; the rest are all imagination.

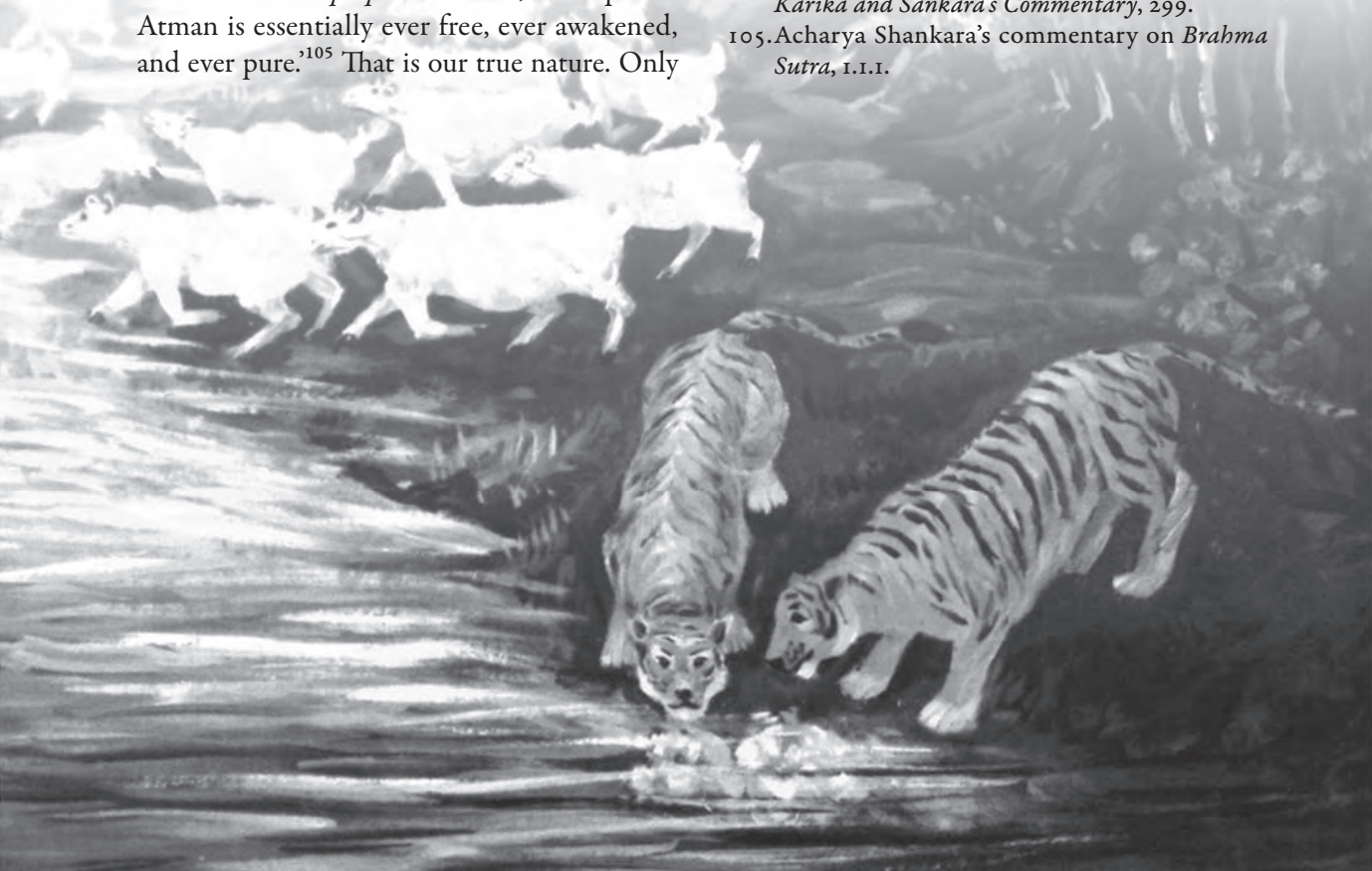
‘All *Dharmas* [or *Jivas*] (entities) are, by their very nature, beginningless and unattached like the *Ākāśa*’ (303). All beings by their very nature are unattached, this is the Vedantic teaching. *Prakṛitya akashavat jneyah sarve dharma anadayah*. ‘There is not the slightest variety in them, in any way, at any time’ (ibid.). All objects, all things—they are essentially one and uniform and infinite. There is no variety in them. ‘All *Jivas* are, by their very nature, illumined from the very beginning and they are ever immutable in their nature’ (304). This Shankara repeats in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*: ‘*Nitya budha mukta svarupa paramatman*; the supreme Atman is essentially ever free, ever awakened, and ever pure.’¹⁰⁵ That is our true nature. Only

we don’t realise it. And we wander about here and there. One day we will realise it and say, yes, we are always like this; not that now we have become that. It is only recognition. You don’t become, you realise. That is why de-hypnotisation, Swamiji said. The sheep-lion was de-hypnotised and he realised that I am the real lion. And so bleating goes and roaring comes. That is fearlessness. Bleating means fear. A sheep is full of fear.

(To be concluded)

References

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101. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.11–2.
102. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda’s Kārikā and Śaṅkara’s Commentary*, 274.
103. *Mahabharata*, 2.65.15.21.
104. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda’s Kārikā and Śaṅkara’s Commentary*, 299.
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Saga of Epic Proportions

Swami Sandarshanananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

SISTER NIVEDITA'S CONVICTION spelt out to Hammond above that Swamiji 'was NOT dead' and was with her 'always' never died. Time and again she felt his presence in the things she did, deeming them his work. She was relentlessly trying to remain absolutely faithful to him. Despite her official separation from the Ramakrishna Mission, she was never, as such, dissociated from it. The notice published by the editor of *The Indian Mirror* at her behest on 22 July 1902 said: 'Sister Nivedita begs us to inform the public that, at the conclusion of the days of mourning for the Swami Vivekananda, it has been decided between the members of the Order at Bellur Math and herself, that her work shall henceforth be regarded as free, and entirely independent of their sanction and authority.'²⁰ There were a number of reasons why a firm decision was arrived at. It was the result of an open discussion held among the authorities of the Order and herself. The fact that it never ended on any bitter note is evident from the sweet and responsible relationship that was there between her and the then president and the General Secretary of the Order Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda respectively. Her connection with them as well as with all other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna 'henceforth' grew unbreakably strong. Her letters containing matters about them bear witness to her informal and deep affection for them. She visited Belur Math off and on; they too visited her often. Her brother disciple Swami Sadananda was her constant visitor and her love

for him knew no bounds. The accounts concerning Sadananda that she regularly gave in her various letters are precious documents with regard to her clean connectivity with the Order. When there was much fuss and unfounded criticism, especially by those who were too ready to pick holes with the Mission resorting to this happening, she couldn't remain silent. She couldn't tolerate the false accusations brought against the Mission authorities and decided immediately to react so as to put down all gossip with a forthwith action. She was agitated that some had even outrageously said the mantle of the Order should have fallen on her, consequent upon her Master's death. She therefore came out with a sharp and unequivocal rejoinder in a well-known newspaper in polite but powerful terms, clearing her real position to prove them utterly wrong and incorrect. Within a week, on 28 July her letter to the editor of the *Statesman* muzzled many a motor-mouthed monger, such as a few cunning Brahmos.

Sir,

It is with the deepest pain that I hear of allusions to myself having become—by the death of my great master, the Swami Vivekananda—leader of the Order of Ramakrishna. I must ask you, therefore, to be good enough to give the widest currency at your disposal to the following statement:

1. The Order of Ramakrishna has its Head Quarter at Bellur Math, Howrah and is under the absolute leadership and

authority of the Swami Brahmananda and the Swami Saradananda, two of the most saintly men whom one could ever meet.

2. The Order has received from its two great founders and Gurus a definite deposit of religious thought and realisation which it will be its task henceforth to preserve and develop.
3. My own position towards this religious treasure is that of the humblest learner, merely a Brahmacharini, or novice, not a Sannyassini or fully professed religious; without any pretensions to Sanskrit learning, and set free by the great kindness of my superiors to pursue my social, literary and educational work and studies, entirely outside their direction and supervision. Indeed, since the death of my Guru, I am not likely to be much in contact with any of my fellow-disciples who are not women.
4. To my own mind, no mistake could be more deplorable than that which assumes that the Hindu people require European leaders for their religious life. The very contrary is the case.

I trust that this letter may reach the eyes of many correspondents who will take it as a personal acknowledgement and reply,

I am etc.

Nivedita of Ramakrishna-V

July 28²¹

This letter vindicates, essentially, the most important point with regard to her locus in the Order in an extraordinary situation, appearing in consequence of the sudden demise of her guru, with whom she was so specially connected as to make that question so long irrelevant. The other pertinent point, which automatically emerges from the letter is that, she being the only woman

monastic member and that too a novice as well as a foreigner, could not, obviously, officially continue in the Order with the same ease, let alone the kind of freedom of work she was aspiring for, within the framework of its organisational norms set by her guru himself, which were indeed equally applicable to all monastic members. In a common parlance even, it could be a normal query as to what should be her role in the midst of a complexity of that peculiarity. And, finally, she could prove how foolish it was to raise the question of her becoming the leader of the Order to her own personal advantage, while the spiritual stalwarts such as her guru's brother disciples Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda were very much there. The agenda demanded an immediate in-depth discussion from both sides—her and the Mission's. Without going into the details of the matter, one could, therefore, comfortably conclude that a mutual decision of that sort was truly necessary through a formal agreement, which was reached amicably without the least hassle. Its veracity was eventually evident from the fact that Nivedita sought the advice of the Swamis whenever she found it needed in her work, and the Swamis too came forward with all love and affection to help her without any reservation. For example, one finds she mentioned in a letter dated 3 March 1904: 'Swami Brahmananda is now empowering me to start a History School at Bodh-Gaya—with a group of young men' (2.633). Allusions of things like this remove suspicion from one's mind for good that the relationship among them went sour ever upon any kind of misunderstanding. Much before this in 1902 itself, she wrote from Madras in the course of a lecture trip: 'Swami Ramakrishnananda has been more than good. He has given his strong quiet presence and support to every lecture and every conversation. ... Swamiji is with us' (1.527).

Above all, Sri Sarada Devi, who was unanimously made the abbot and guardian angel of the Order in its very first meeting, was her protector, in the same measure as she was to its monks. She was unflinchingly supporting her independent work, and even shielding her against extraneous assaults by her detractors. In this context one has to bear in mind that one of the fundamental clauses of the rules of the Order peremptorily denies right to participate in politics, which Nivedita sincerely honoured, and instantaneously resolved not to carry on with her political activities staying in the Order which her Master condoned using his prerogative when he was alive. This was the principal reason that goaded her to politely sever official ties with the Mission, for it was otherwise impossible for her to remain aloof from politics under any situation.

Swamiji was peeling her preconceived ideas, and with that were falling the scales of ignorance off her perception, revealing the greatness of her Master, compelling her to worship him with an unprecedented sense of fidelity. Their combination as the teacher and the taught is a poignant example. As perfect preceptor and perfect follower, they shine in the modern hagiography.

The Onus

Nivedita understood the greatness of the monastic Order established by her guru. She understood the greatness of the brother disciples of her guru, who were at her guru's command. And, ultimately, she understood the greatness of the onus of the work laid by her guru on her. All these compounded and conclusively reshaped her as a worthy disciple of Swamiji.

Her mind was saturated with Swamiji's thought. There was not a single moment when she forgot him. The reformation she had undergone was profound and productive. From the moment of her experience at his cremation

ground, Nivedita palpably felt the presence of Swamiji along with her. Earlier, she had no faith in the resurrection of Christ. But, with the dawning of the feeling of Swamiji's presence, she started believing it. While standing beside Swamiji's 'Burning Pyre' she was 'twitched by the sleeve' by Swamiji, she believed, asking her to pick up a small piece of cloth from the bed sheet on which Swamiji's body was being kept, which she earnestly desired for Miss Macleod. Deeply impressed by this occurrence, she wrote to Miss Macleod: 'To him it was very natural—for Swami—our Swami—is *not* dead. Dear Yum! Don't you see? He is only now Himself—and alive—for evermore. Only, there is a little more even than that. In some special way, I know He has determined to abide with us for awhile. What is it for? Is there something that He will guard us from? Or something that He will speed us in, and give us victory?' (1.505). Her conviction that Swamiji still existed in the subtle body waxed with the passage of time. Swamiji had a plan of visiting Japan on invitation which did not materialise because his health was not permitting. Later on, Swami Sadananda went there and had spent a period of three months. Nivedita believed Swamiji had, in fact, visited Japan, as he had planned, in Sadananda's person. Her belief was reinforced on understanding it from Sadananda that he once had a vision of Swamiji in actual physical form. On 14 January 1904 she wrote to Miss Macleod:

If it had not been for your work in opening up Japan to us, dear Sadananda never would have gone, and in his person I feel that Swamiji has taken possession of that land. Please do not, either with me or anyone else, ever refer to what I am going to tell you. It should be kept as a very sacred secret. *Swamiji has appeared to Sadananda* and spoken with him,

while there, once. Sadananda is full of it. He feels that he has reached the goal. He *knows* that all is true, and we have reached. And you too dear Yum will feel a peace and strength from this, I know (2.619).

She was deeply repentant that she had gone astray for a while, and became a trouble to Swamiji. But then she confided in Macleod, saying in a kind of complaining tone that Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, and Swamiji could have brought her back easily, if they willed. She was somewhat sentimental there. She wrote: 'But I cannot forgive them—I mean the Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji—only not for the world would I disturb Swamiji—I have only wanted to bear His burden for Him!—if I am allowed to drift away. You know I *want* to be faithful! And they could help me—and get me right—if They would. Well! Well! I was never easy to set right, I suppose' (2.569).

One of the basic elements of Nivedita's character was transparency, by dint of which she could win many a heart. Though emotional, she was not hiding her own deficiency, indicating which perhaps obstructed Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji from setting her right. She thought she was beginning to have the same kind of feeling as Swamiji had during the last years of his life. 'It is strangely penetrating to know that He Himself worked all those last years under that bitter sense of failure that I begin only dimly to apprehend. It is strange—is it not?—that in all my letters to Him before I came to India I used to say, "If I prove unworthy, there will be others ten times worthier and better fitted, found for you"' (2.565). Telling like this, she then told in the same letter dated 29 April 1903 to Macleod with a prayerful heart: 'God grant me to speak brave true words in His name before I die—words with His life flowing

Belur Math View from Ganga



DRAWING: SUBHAJIT

through them untainted, unimpaired—that I may see that last confidence shining in His face once more—and go away into eternity, feeling that I have not disappointed Him. That is all I ask—all—all’ (ibid.).

None can deny that reading her letters full of such things, one gets deeply touched, seeing how she was intrinsically consecrating herself again and again to Swamiji, trying to remain absolutely faithful to him. It could not be found in any recorded account like this that a disciple washes her mistakes so thoroughly by her tears to please her guru, even while he is no more. She had been invited to go to the West, but could not decide whether to go, for she was absolutely committed to the work she was doing, knowing it to be Swamiji’s wish. She wrote: ‘The offer of course was beyond my wildest dreams, but so much is opening up here ... and hundred plans for the neighbourhood itself, that I feel that Swamiji wishes me to stay here. After all, that—I think—is His main and steady wish. And “His will is my peace” as the souls say in Paradise to Dante. I shall be brooding constantly over His Life, already many ideas are crowding in upon me’ (2,587–8).

Like Swamiji, Nivedita also did not have a long life. She died when she was forty-four only, which indeed happened according to her own estimation. She thought she would die after completing a cycle of twelve years from the day of her spiritual initiation and the name Nivedita she had received from Swamiji, that is, from 25 March 1898. She recounted all that and also had told Miss Macleod about Chiro’s prediction regarding her lifespan. She went down her memory lane as well as renewed her vow of pleasing her guru through her dedicated service to humanity at any cost, writing to Miss Macleod on 17 March 1904. ‘6 years ago this very day—and on a Thursday too—I saw the Holy Mother for

the first time and went home with you to the cottage. Do you remember? “Come on this journey” said Swamiji “and I will make you into 20 Mrs. Besants!” It was that day that he first called me by my name—“Margaret”. My lecture at the Star Theatre must have been given on Friday night March the 11th’ (2,635–6).

She continued: ‘In the cycle of the years, we have come round to the same days again. Friday next, March, 25th will be my birthday, when I was first called “Nivedita”. We are, then, entering on the seventh year. May it be blessed to His Service! I wish it might be unflawed—perfect—but this seems too much to ask’ (ibid.).

Talking about Chiro’s prediction, she said: ‘Do you remember how Chiro foretold that I would die between the 42nd and 49th years? I am now 36. So I suppose I shall see *this* cycle through. I fancy I shall die in 1912’ (ibid.). Since she died at 44, Chiro was correct. She was all the more correct because she breathed her last on 13 October 1911, soon after the cycle was accomplished as she had foreseen. Then came out again her wailing pain, not ready to leave:

Oh Yum—*will* these years make a difference in the position of India? *Shall* I be allowed to see that I was of some use to Swamiji? I only want—I only wanted. I shall always only want—to be allowed to carry His burden for Him. If I could only feel that His Great Soul went free—and could play and be at ease—because, on the Earthside I existed—in that feeling would lie Heaven and Eternity, I don’t care the least about Mukti. I don’t even, though you may think this an absurd statement from *me*, want Him to forgive my sins or be sweet to me. I don’t mind about my relation to Him personally. I only want to carry His burden and leave Him free—free to enjoy God. Oh what a soul of whom one can dream such a dream and know that it is true! Is that not to be God Himself? (ibid.).

Nivedita was relentlessly seeking expiation of

her folly—a loving child who couldn't come to terms with the loss of her dear father, having no peace from her while living, as it were. She observed how Swamiji was suffering and how intensely he wanted emancipation from all anxiety. His inner urge to lead a life bereft of all worldly ties was so pronounced that she remembered and suffered wondering she too was his worry, adding to his trouble, instead of being his necessary relief in order to mitigate his sorrow. She, however, upheld the glory of Swamiji's death always, mingling with the strain of her agonies. She wrote on 7 August 1902:

And so came the end. He went out—as one drops a loose garment. Without a struggle. 'Conqueror of Death'. But He has NOT left us. For my part, He has been with me far far more since that night than for 2 years before—and I trust and pray that this may not cease to be—for Oh Yum I have only one desire really, and that is to act so that, were He back again in the toils of human ignorance He would have no right to feel anxiety or distress. But I do not know—I feel so much power inside. But I *do* nothing. Bless me that He may indeed be pleased with us all! One *must* so live that one justifies Him (1.492).

This entire letter to Miss Macleod is a treasure that holds out those last days and divine moments before Swamiji's journey to the celestial spheres from where he descended as Sri Ramakrishna declared on his first meeting with Swamiji at Dakshineswar.

Her sense of guilt was excruciatingly oozing out of her being in a flow of molten words that affected all others who happened to read them, with an unknown pain. But, her sense of guilt, affection, purity, renunciation, struggle, love of God, and a host of other genuine qualities together had, nevertheless, resulted in her unqualified submission to Swamiji, which had, in time, unfailingly moulded her as Swamiji's

daughter as well as disciple, who grew indomitable to be able to carry forward Swamiji's mission of regeneration of India. Doing good to India, according to her Master's ideas and spirit, was her goal and determination—an important component of which was her work on science, making Dr J C Bose's maltreatment by the British government a key issue. Although unobtrusive, she was a true collaborator of his works, and a crusader per se.

There was hardly another like Nivedita who could be said to have understood Swamiji so well when Swamiji talked about India's lost individuality. So, the idea of the retrieval of India's nationality occupied the upper most layer of her mind. She attached the maximum priority to this task, following Swamiji's message. She proclaimed: 'The whole task now is to give the word "Nationality" to India—in all its breadth and meaning. The rest will do itself. India must be observed by this great conception. Hindu and Mohammedan must become one in it, with a passionate admiration of each other' (2.553). One could see in it a neat reflection of Swamiji's musing over the Vedantic brain and Islam body for a future India. Clarifying herself, she continued: 'It means new views of history, of custom, and it means the assimilation of the whole Ramakr. [Ramakrishna]-Vivekananda idea in Religion—the synthesis of all religious ideas' (ibid.). She then went further into the concept and said: 'It means a final understanding of the fact that the political process and the economic disaster are only side-issues, that the one essential fact is realisation of her Nationality by the Nation' (ibid.).

The trials and tribulations through which she passed and the mental agony she bore during her soul-searching, she realised, were temporarily required in her quest for spirituality. Justifying them, she said to Miss Macleod earlier,

on another occasion: 'Mind, all that has been was necessary in order to save life and brain, and perhaps too in order to exhaust my Karma. Only, it was like S. RK's [Sri Ramakrishna's] worship of Christ or Mahomet or Woman. Having once done it, He left it. So, having *realised* this, I am not to limit myself by it, I AM to pass on—I AM *a nun*—not anything else' (1.509). Not forgetting that all her learning was from Swamiji, she then said: 'Who has taught me this? *He!*—and since He went' (*ibid.*). Once she thus fixed her life on the monastic principles, she was blessed with the spiritual qualities, which guarded her against all blemishes, though she got incessantly involved in worldly affairs for the regeneration of India.

Her utterly selfless services replete with intricacies gave her a distinctive place, with her name going down in the annals of history. She dealt out a hard-hitting blow to the evil design of the British policy to make India vulnerable and rootless with a motive of draining India's human and material resources. Her overtly articulated correspondences with Miss Macleod especially, and with her other dear ones generally, are a demonstration of her extraordinary mettle and maturity. Intrepid and incisive, she reflected Swamiji's substance and action in every effort she applied to rebuild India. The fact of her doubting condition with her guru for a period resembled her guru's doubting condition with his guru, signifying a tradition appreciated by the spiritually wise. As Sri Ramakrishna patiently handled the restive Swamiji knowing full well what was there in store for Swamiji in the future, so also did Swamiji tolerantly shape the wayward Sister Nivedita judging her high potential. Nivedita related her story to Miss Macleod and Swamiji his to Nivedita. On 18 October 1899 Nivedita wrote: 'At lunch on Friday, the King [Swamiji] talked again about Sri R. K. He abused himself

for being filled and poisoned with the Western reaction of those days, so that he was always looking and questioning whether this man was 'holy' or not. After 6 years he came to understand that He was *not* holy, because He had become *identified with holiness*. He was full of gaiety and merriment—and he had expected the 'holy' to be so different' (1.215). Both Nivedita and Swamiji had undergone sea transformations by virtue of the tutelages of their respective gurus—they saw them as God incarnate and worked for the fulfilment of their earthly mission untiringly and died in harness.

Now, going back to the Bose narrative, Nivedita's intention with regard to Bull's role she imagined in Bose's life, becomes absolutely transparent in her letter of 19 April 1899. Swamiji was quite explicit to her while describing Mrs Bull's greatness. He once said to her: 'I more and more think of Mrs. Bull—for it must be done to the right person, in the right way, and at the proper time. And she seems to me the only person who ever knew exactly how to give—*so quietly*—and never making a mistake' (1.178). On another occasion he was almost rapturous in eulogising Mrs Bull. 'I love that woman more perhaps than my own mother. Every drop of my blood I would give for one hair of her head—so good she is and brave' (1.182). After hearing from Swamiji in this manner, Nivedita could very well decide how much Mrs Bull could be useful to her as Bose's patron, especially with regard to the finances he would require. Roping in Bull, she reaped as she believed she could. A little more than a year before her death she wrote a letter to Bull which lets one to see how Bull did for Bose by then, in a period of over ten years. On 11 August 1910 Nivedita wrote to Bull: 'You know this school is really yours, and my writings are really yours, and the science books are yours, the laboratory

will be yours ... Don't you feel that it is a goodly array of things you have made possible by your support? ... No, I must say that used as you have used it, money seems to me a great and good thing' (2.1131). Continuing she said:

For years I felt that you and the B. [Bose] and I all breathed with the one breath almost, and believed that the union between us all was deep, organic, fundamental like that between mother and children. One might strain at the cord or bite and snap, but the tie itself could never be broken. Am I not right? But I am right. We are not separate persons really, but expressions of one infinite soul. We melt into one another at times and you could not be cut off from Swamiji's blessing, nor could I. You were born for your part, I for mine, the B. for his. But they are not really separate, we are indeed one (ibid.).

Mrs Bull lived hardly for five months after receiving this letter. She died in January 1911, and Nivedita in October the same year.

Nivedita's sincere proposal to act basing the maternal instinct that she had discovered too keen in Bull was propitious. She knew Mrs Bull's heart was hungry to pour out her motherly instinct on such a one, who could receive it dearly with due respect and honour. That Bose was a perfect element to fulfil such a demand and that Bose's possession as son to any lady of Bull's ilk could be a matter of extreme pride and privilege was as clear as daylight to Nivedita. So, mentioning that her 'alarm was needless', for Swamiji 'seems now to have quite recovered and is planning for the West (for his second visit) in earnest', (1.118) she wrote this letter to Mrs Bull, making her plea a sacred appeal. She said:

I have just been telling Yum how I spent last Sunday at the Bose's. It was just heaven—and for the first time I entered into the full possession of the heart of my dear Dr. Bose. It filled me with reverence—and leaves me dragging a

heavier load than ever of Anglo Indian shame. When I see you again I shall be able to tell you all, but now I must not. It is hardly fair even to quote (or would be unfair to anyone else!) his last words 'and I cannot tell you what a need I have of being loved!'

He is lonely—you know how and why, without my saying, his brilliant success in Europe might cost him love and sympathy of colleagues that were his before he went, 'How *can* I go and tell them,' he burst out once, 'that it hasn't made a scrap of difference? *You* know I have no vanity of that sort!'—and that very power of concentration that has made his work so great, makes him impossible for him to forget this barrier, and he loses heart for his work—you know all the rest, dear Grannie. He loves you as a son—(he told me never to write to you without sending his love and admiration, for 'it was always going on'). Do write to him and treat him just like one! You know too how to inspire a great man to do great work—a greater kind of greatness, in its own sweet and perfect way, that this man's I know you would say that you had never seen. He is sick of life—yet honestly anxious to hold on and on just to prove to his countrymen that *their* chances of success in experimental science are as great as any European's.

Imagine, with this hot at my heart as it has been all week—what I felt when I read the enclosed impertinence an hour ago. I could cry for the cruelty of the insults that we heap on human beings.

I have had, even in the little English Society that I see, to say once or twice 'This man is one of my most intimate friends' in a firm tone, when Dr. Bose's name was mentioned—not that anything was yet been said: It was the tone—and his crime lay in what?—that his name was important enough to be mentioned! But such power to love and suffer and endure I have never dreamt of—and the inarticulateness of it is so terrible—for expression has not been his fate—and endurance has. I am now thinking now of quite other things of which he told me.

I wrote him one of my fiery letters, as I told Yum, at which I fear you will smile—and I told him that he must take the friendship I could give him in such unworthy measure as only the Earnest of your and Yum's and Swami's pride and trust in him. So you will live up to this I know—dear S. Sara!' (1.119–20).

It is discernible from this letter how Nivedita was determined to draw Mrs Bull nearer to Bose for buttressing his drooping spirit and win Bull's intimacy to him like a doting mother to her dear child. Nivedita's triumph in it was imperative for the confidence she enjoyed among Swamiji's followers, which was unquestionably high indeed. To them, she was immensely trusted. Her unflinching and unconditional submission to India and Swamiji was the most important factor that had spun them together with one another as a single heart and mind. They corroborated her crusade against British conspiracy to denigrate Indian science, art, religion, history, philosophy, literature, and so on. It was her unspoken spiritual vow that she would take her guru's challenges forward and intellectually crush its evil intention of establishing India as uncivilised, deserving to be assisted and taken care of for emancipation from abysmal gloom. She was trying her best to expose its ulterior motive of extorting India's wealth to the hilt behind a cunning pos-turing of being India's well-wisher, even Saviour.

That Mrs Bull played as a doting mother in Bose's life and work, bringing him under her protective wings and, thereby, dishing out an overt support to his work as well as to India's cause, is apparent from a couple of letters, among them one written in 1905 is presented below to show how richly the mother-son relationship between them had ripened in a few years since 1899. The letters let one comprehend the degree to which Bull was succour to Bose and to what extent Bose was intimate with her.

Mrs Bull writes on 12 June 1905:

My dear Son,

I have read four chapters of the book—many, many points I understand is related to previous work. How clearly you set aside previous conclusions of others, reg. Prof. Waller's wrong current smoothly and go into these wonderful demonstration by thermal and optic and mechanical nerves! The new instrument even more complex and marvelous than I saw, and the *applications* of current etc. *all automatic!!!*

It is strange that each sentence means so much, and yet I do not understand anything!

The Secretary [Sister Nivedita] is fortunate to follow all without the laboratory work.

I have mentioned in my correspondence my desire that your records and scientific *ms.* should be safe-guarded. The uncertainty of life and, as well, the uncertainty of the right disposal of your papers in case of your death, made this wise. All this your secretary has gone over with you she could edit probably?

If you could persuade her possibly to put it on an understood basis of a professional kind—this would if you wish by will to empower her to act as your literary executor with full control of your notes and scientific papers—be generally respected and understood.

Your prompt action at the time of her illness was a worthy recognition of your right to make conditions for her recovery and comfort as your co-worker. And if you wish to make this privilege in your part in an emergency, cover the possible emergencies that one may reasonably prepare for, I shall be glad.

She has always from her nature itself in the freedom her religious calling gives her, opportunities ample to give her service: but in the matters when she earns by actual manual work, it is a satisfaction to have that part on an acknowledged basis?

(Continued on page 428)

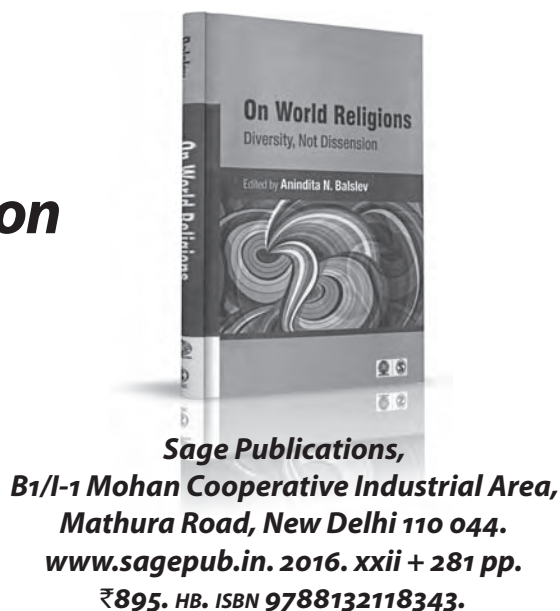
REVIEW ARTICLE

On World Religions: Diversity, Not Dissension

Ed. Anindita N Balslev

THIS IS A TIMELY VOLUME by distinguished scholars who have done significant work in an area which is of immense and immediate relevance. The editor herself, based in India and Denmark, organiser of the International Cross-Cultural Conversation (CCC) conferences, has done significant work in this area.

In reviewing this volume, I felt one has to keep two contexts: the first is the current interest in Swami Vivekananda's global 150th birth anniversary, which attracted the hitherto indifferent secular scholars; the second is the editor's feeling that she is 'thankful for the opportunity to carry forward this project so powerfully envisioned by Swami Vivekananda but which still has remained unfinished to this day' (xxii). The envisioned, obviously one expects, to achieve pragmatic forms in the articles in the volume. I may be 'myopic' but, except for one or two articles, notably Swami Bhajanananda's, there is no evidence to feel that the 'unfinished' work of Swamiji can or need to be finished. As a scholarly volume, this has impeccable intentions: 'The really crucial question before us at present is how do we move on to a plane of collective existence when the presence of diversity of religious traditions will no longer to [sic] be perceived as a cause for dissension, but rather be cherished as our common resource that can enrich and



empower us in ways that we cannot even imagine today' (ibid.).

Since we cannot imagine, obviously we have to be thankful to the available sources. Therefore, the significance of the present volume has to be appreciated and avoid the disappointment that there could have been more effectively framed models for 'finishing' Swamiji's agendas. Hence the inherent risk: the essays are hermeneutically what one expects them to be—the outcome of either conscious or unconscious academic paraphernalia, neglecting the simple truths of experimental spirituality, the classic statement, 'As many faiths, so many paths', of Sri Ramakrishna, the authentic spokesperson of that truth.

In this way, one expects diversity not to sink to divisive tendencies of extolling one's faith and gently eliminate what does not cohere with the former. Since Swamiji is the new 'blue-eyed' figure now and even those who never heard his name are desperate to involve him for purely academic matters and its favours, can we say political? It may be that we are in a counterproductive ethos of enthusiasm and have reached a point

where one can gently whisper to oneself: 'Save Swamiji from the scholastics!' No offence meant.

The contributors to the volume are well-known figures. The honourable President of India, Dr Pranab Mukherjee's inaugural speech is transparent, direct, and totally focussing on Swamiji in terms of the central theme: 'Being a Universalist'. Swamiji's 'knowledge and understanding of spiritualism went beyond Hinduism' (xi). And, more important to the present age, he viewed religion as 'the science of consciousness', an aspect which needs further, urgent analysis for a society that is 'confronted with issues challenging ... ethics and morality' (ibid.), which have solutions in Swamiji.

Let me quickly cite some familiar and frequent figures in areas which this book contains: Dr Karan Singh, Jeffery D Long, now familiar in India, as also is his book on Hinduism,¹ A K Merchant—on the Bahá'í faith, Mushrul Hasan, and representatives from outside India who bring their own views on diversity. There is also part three, containing conversations by the architect of this project, Balslev, H H Dalai Lama, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Dr Karan Singh, and Reverend Mpho Tutu.

Perhaps, a useful theme comes from Whitney A Bauman: 'Hybridity in Meaning-making Practices'. Though I almost winced at 'Hybridity'—even after having taught the postmodernist methods and its terminology, but then it is *needed*. Anticipating our naiveté, 'how do we begin to understand "interreligious" or "multi-religious" dialogue' (147), of course 'hybrid' is the key. Because the 'hybrid' is already existent: 'Christians practice Yoga [do yoga practitioners practise Christianity, I naively wonder]; people of many religious faiths take components of modern cosmology and other sciences [naively I assumed "science-religion" issue has evaporated from its own inner imbalances]. They are all seen

'to be part of their "worldviews"'. Besides, there are 'to be part of their "worldviews" prophetic voices such as those of Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama'. No mention of Swami Vivekananda, whose birth was commemorated through the international conference that led to this book. Their messages are held as well beyond their roots. And the punchline is: 'In other words, we are always already hybrid meaning-making creatures' (ibid.). Not Swamiji's potentially divine souls! And one thing is clear: you do a course in postmodern dialectic, better do one at least to read this article!

And, Bauman continues: 'Ground Rules for Making Good Meaning: Multiperspectivalism, Agnosticism, and Polydoxy'. And meaning has 'the planetary context, the existential context, the aesthetic context, and the ethical context' (149). Since all these were beyond me now, earlier in my academic days, I fail to understand, therefore I relied upon what made some meaning to me: 'If we are going to do justice to our creatureliness, we *must* begin to resituate our own [our own = creaturely] existential conflict within the planetary out of which it emerges and to which it *shall* return' (157) [Emphasis added]. *Shall*, no exception.

Perhaps, for a review, long citations of any one author, is unfair. I had no alternative. Also because, the 'unfinished' agenda of Swamiji finds only a peripheral place. Isn't it an opportunity lost? I even wonder whether some writers have heard of, let alone read, Swami Vivekananda. And the tendency among Indian scholars is to use the current Western textual evaluations as, shall we say, the inevitable paraphernalia for a critical approach.

Of course, there are many areas that the contributors have covered. In terms of extant religions, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Bahá'í have been covered in the first part. In the second

part, issues on religious diversity come to the fore. Themes range from creating peace, religious diversity, dissent, pluralism, conservative faiths, and above all, a recurring phenomenon of faith vis-a-vis violence. There is also a study of Swamiji and secularism. Dr Karan Singh has written the Foreword and the paper 'Vedanta in the Nuclear Age'. With characteristic phrasing of the quintessential background of this book, he says: 'We are perhaps like the fabled continent of Atlantis, rich and resplendent beyond compare but ultimately sinking below the waves, unable to survive its own technological ingenuity' (99).

But, then, there are also the myths of the Milky Ocean, Garala, and the like. But the main assertion is that 'Vedanta is a universal religion', and 'it accepts the infinite possibilities of movements towards the divine, it does not seek to limit or confine us to any particular formulation. It not only accepts but welcomes a multiplicity of paths to the divine' (102). Obviously religions are not 'sinking below the waves' of technology for that has, as Dr Karan Singh mentions later, given us 'unprecedented power' (100). Only it has to be used, not misused.

In terms of pragmatic measures, Swami Bhajananda's paper gives a graphic assessment of the contemporary religious scene vis-a-vis the Ramakrishna Movement. He identifies, in his unique methodological manner, the 'mega-trends' of the 'new age': Knowledge revolution; humanism that 'stresses the rights of underprivileged people, equality of gender, and protection against all forms of exploitation, injustice, cruelty'; and above all, the 'fourth and most significant mega-trend is the rise of a new wave of spiritual awareness, a general awakening of the spiritual consciousness of humanity which has been hailed as "spiritual evolution" ... to separate spirituality from religion resulting in what is known as "secular spirituality"' (54).²

In short, says Bhajananda: 'This new spirituality is cutting across the barriers of religion, race, nationality, etc., and is creating "a global spirituality"'. Obviously, this is the tangible consequence of the Ramakrishna Movement. Finally, with his characteristic pragmatic, he suggests concrete steps for dynamic diversity without dissension: "'Value Education" [where] ... the spiritual treasures of world religions can also be made available to students. ... [Bringing] together liberal-minded people of all religions ... Religious leaders can evolve joint action plans and implement these plans ... welfare programs such as providing food, clothes, medicines, etc., to poor children, destitute people, and helpless women. ... [And finally,] A good deal of distrust and ill will towards other religions can be eliminated if the parents, especially the mothers, take the initiative of inculcating the spirit of friendship, love, sympathy, and cooperation in the minds of their children from childhood' (57).

I cited this in detail, because with the same dynamism that went into the making of this book, Balslev could organise a *goshti*, seminar, on 'Practical Spirituality Now'.

Finally, let us look at a few more aspects of this volume: Always candid, urbane, and matter-of-fact—not mincing words, I mean, Mushirul Hasan tackles the problem of Islam and its intolerably distorted views, even by well-known India watchers from abroad—they come to India when they sense that they may be placed on the shelf and not a pedestal. In this case, Hasan says that V S Naipaul and his views on Islam are 'Intellectual Catastrophe of the First Order'. Its roots are, or rather the source is, for Naipaul 'passion'. For, Naipaul, 'Any passion has to be encouraged. I always support actions coming out of passion, as these reflect creativity' (191).

Hasan, in whose writing tolerance is a weapon of acute dialectical triumph, asks: 'Whose passion?

Of those Muslims who, despite the bitterness since December 1992, still weave the garlands used in the temple and produce everything necessary for dressing the icons preparatory to worship' (ibid.). A deeply moving detail which signals the real theme of this volume: 'Diversity, not Dissension'. As a diversion, it was my problem to teach Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*.³ My students thought it was a privilege to teach for me and a delight for them. But I came to know later that the majority of the students left Naipaul in academic limbo! By the way, in one of the biographies of Naipaul, I read that among the books he read, was the *Raja Yoga* of Swami Vivekananda. In short, there are pockets of dissension. Natural, but amazing amidst conflict, is the fact that there is a tremendous concern to bring about harmony and peace.

There are quite a few attempts to explore the crucial question of religious dissensions. What is striking is the focus on Sri Ramakrishna who *lived* the life of harmony without hierarchical privilege of faiths. There, is, for instance, the paper on 'Conflict and Violence in the Name of Religion' by Steven I Wilkinson. He already has done a full-length study of this subject.⁴ The impression I have of this paper is—I might be wrong—that in it there is more about the political implications of India's bifurcation vis-a-vis the apparent religious tensions than anything else. Surely, politics has some derivatives from faiths, but by and large India survived the consequences in a way which has ensured continuing stability to this day, in spite of almost predictable troubles in educational institutions, these days.

One redeeming feature of such an approach is: religious affiliations continue to be the dialectic of engaging oneself in balancing differences. The most glaring factor is that academics of both the right and the left are conscious of their ideological assumptions and stick to them. In this atmosphere, not only Swamiji but even


Sri Ramakrishna acquire instant legitimacy of the very basic roots of harmony. It may not be religious but in India, religion is a many-headed phenomenon, often even a monster.

In such tense ethos the paper on 'Interfaith Relations in Sociocultural Context of Kerala' by Annakutty V Kurian-Findeis is quite timely. Few analysts try to look at the point that religious diversity, which is just considered religious, might have not be religious at all, let alone spiritual. In fact, the sacred-secular dichotomy needs to be reconsidered in the light of their integral nature. A very relevant assessment of this with reference to Swamiji and Indian secularism has been attempted by Makarand R Paranjape. Very timely, of course, this is 'Indian' secularism. As he cites the article of Jakob De Roover, there is also 'The Vacuity of Secularism', specially the Indian brand vis-a-vis the Western origins. Is secularism rooted in origins that are irrefutably and globally Western?

But, then, is there 'a fundamental difference between Vivekananda's and Ramakrishna's contexts', so glaring that the Great Master lived in an ethos where 'faiths such as Islam were not necessarily inimical to Hinduism' (231)? But Vivekananda did face the wrath of Christian missionaries. Perhaps, as an argument it should also be taken into account that many Christians, men and women, were lifelong followers and their contribution to the evolution of the Ramakrishna Movement was crucial. Perhaps, secularism is like a chameleon: it changes colours. Academics need to be categorical in their rigid dialectical manoeuvres, but then there are no such truths that can remain bifurcated.

I have not been able to look at *all* the articles. But, doubtless this is an invaluable, but uneven, volume on a theme which needs attention right now. But let at least some of us remember what the honourable President of India, Dr Pranab Mukherjee has noted: 'All through

his life, Swamiji had spread his Guru's message of harmony of religions: "*Yato Mat, Tato Path*" (*As many faiths, so many paths*). Swamiji viewed religion as the "science of consciousness", and believed that religion and modern science are complementary rather than contradictory. He portrayed religion as a universal concept and liberated it from the age-old scourges of superstitions, dogma, and intolerance' (xi).

As I have suggested, these themes need more intense explorations from the perspectives of pragmatic application, not mere dialectical subtleties and hermeneutical hair-splitting. The time has come for this, I hope the reader agrees. Dissension, after all, is misunderstood diversity! Perhaps, a companion volume on the pragmatic side of this area is an imperative need. 

Prof. M Sivaramkrishna

Notes and References

1. See Jeffery D Long, *A Vision for Hinduism: Beyond Hindu Nationalism* (London: I B Tauris, 2006).
2. For a detailed study of the phenomenon of secular spirituality, see Linda A Mercadante, *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious* (London: Oxford University, 2014).
3. See V S Naipaul, *The Mimic Men: A Novel* (London: Penguin, 1967).
4. See Steven I Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006).

(Continued from page 423)

It was my desire always that Swamiji should come to have the leisure for writing which he always craved. If his child [Nivedita] can achieve this it seems to me a continuity, to us all, of the which, one thought of for him. His life remains to be written and much else in the same line already published by her.

I hope that she may persist me to so arrange for the conditions essential to her quiet and health that she may accomplish this and at the same time, feel that she is earning her right to do this by bringing her trained efficiency to the task.

I shall be thankful if my feeling can meet the occasion and, together, we provide for her the necessary conditions;—for I promise she will not venture as in the past so much general expenditure of physical strength. The illnesses point to a chance of one cause or another—not the combining, as hitherto, such exacting labours with pen, voice and teaching together?

Thank you for letting me know the publishing estimate.

And if for assistants and other possible expenses (instruments) etc. you require more than I have sent this year for the plant-research—please tell me.

I enclose a draft for that publishing amount—and thank you so much for letting me have a very tiny share in the great work. If you can arrange for £50 for secretary allow me please to send that for this year.

And above all stands radiant the love with which my life is blessed!

God grant protect and give you strength and peace always

June 12th 1905

Always *Mother* (2.774–5).

Did I leave with you a business note of mine given you until I should make my wish secure in my will? If so, please return it to me.

(To be continued)

References

20. *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharya, 1969), 225.
21. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, 2 vols (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1982), 1.530.

BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Shraddha

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA emphasised that we should all possess the quality of *shraddha*. He said that it was not possible to accurately translate this word into English. For cultivating *shraddha*, it is important that we understand its meaning. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *shraddha* is made up of two words, *shrad* and *dha*. It means to give *shrad* or truthfulness. The word *shraddha* means to have faith or to be truthful. It also means to be faithful to something. What is it one should have faith in or be truthful to? Whatever is taught to us by our teachers and scriptures. Does that mean that one has to blindly accept whatever is taught? No, not at all. *Shraddha* requires that we be truthful at all times to ourselves. If what is being taught to us does not feel reasonable, we have to be truthful to our reasoning and question the teacher. That means we have to be sincere in all pursuits. Though the entire meaning and gravity of the word *shraddha* is not conveyed, 'sincerity' could be seen as the closest to the original.

Shraddha implies that we put in the effort that is required of us by the teachers and the scriptures. If the teacher says that we need to practise a particular discipline before we understand it or acquire expertise in it—that is exactly what we need to do. That means *shraddha*

requires an implicit faith in the good intentions of the teacher and the scriptures. One has to act according to their instructions after getting thoroughly convinced about their rationality by asking questions about the instructions. For this questioning, one has to be sincere and be satisfied only when one gets all the answers and should not feign knowledge.

Swamiji stresses on the need to have *shraddha* and says that it is because of the lack of *shraddha* that India has been facing problems. When this faith comes out of the faith one has in one's true nature, the Atman, then that faith gives strength and one is able to do anything. Faith in oneself is what *shraddha* is all about. Without this faith, no leaders can be created. Without it, there can be no independence. It is the position of a giver that asks for *shraddha*. Swamiji gives the example of Nachiketa from the *Katha Upanishad* to demonstrate how *shraddha* overpowered him, when he saw that his father was not performing a Vedic sacrifice and instead of giving the best as charity, was giving away useless things. Instead of confronting his father, he reasoned that since he was the best wealth of his father, he should also be given away as charity! This attitude is the hallmark of *shraddha*.

Without *shraddha*, one cannot be successful in any venture. It can be called as 'sincere faith' in oneself. This would be different from a brash attitude resulting from youthful exuberance and nonchalance.

TRADITIONAL TALES

The Goddess's Blessings

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE KING ARRANGED for the stay of the ascetic in a big mansion with all comforts, near the palace. Night set in. The king took the ascetic to the new mansion, and spreading a new velvet mattress on a golden cot, prayed the ascetic to take rest on the bed. The ascetic was amazed at the miraculous blessings of the goddess, who had made him stay in a huge mansion, taking him from the shade of a tree.

The ascetic sat on the velvet mattress. The queen and the princess gave the ascetic a royal treatment by serving him with milk and fruits. The king himself started fanning the ascetic, who was accustomed to eating dried fruits and leaves that he got on the cliff. After having stayed in the mansion and having moved around in the palace and royal mansions getting royal hospitality, the ascetic expressed his wish to return to his abode on the cliff. This was not accepted by the king, the queen, and the ministers. They repeatedly prayed to the ascetic with folded hands that he should live with them. The ascetic accepted to stay in the mansion, thinking of testing the goddess's blessings.

That night, the king and the queen were in deep sleep in the inner quarters, where nobody was allowed. If anyone entered these quarters, they would be severely punished. The ascetic knew this. However, in order to test whether there would really be no danger if there is the grace of the goddess; the ascetic entered these inner quarters in the middle of the night and repeatedly slapped the sleeping king and the

queen, who woke up with a start. They were confused by this act of the ascetic. Further, the ascetic dragged the king and the queen like animals and brought them outside the bedchamber. One who touches the queen was worthy of hanging and so, the ascetic deserved punishment.

The goddess understood the reason for the ascetic's actions and she decided to somehow save him from danger. Because of the goddess's grace, as soon as the king and the queen were dragged out of the bedchamber by the ascetic, the king's bedchamber crumbled to pieces. The king and the queen saw this and concluded that the ascetic could foresee the destruction of the bedchamber because of his spiritual power and it was to protect them that the ascetic dragged them out of the bedchamber. The regard they had for the ascetic increased thousandfold. They tearfully prostrated at the feet of the ascetic.

The ascetic marvelled at the divine grace of the goddess that had made the king and the queen prostrate at his feet instead of hanging him. The entire nation worshipped the ascetic as one who had saved the king twice.

One evening, the ascetic was strolling in the royal gardens. His eyes fell on a good ripe mango hanging from a tree. He plucked it. In a while, King Parantaka came there to meet the ascetic, who gave him the mango. The king returned to the palace, happy on receiving the mango from the ascetic. The king kept the mango in a safe place in his room, intending to eat it in the morning.

That night, the goddess appeared in the ascetic's dream and said: 'I am now going away from you. From this moment, my blessings will not be with you.' Saying this, the goddess vanished. The ascetic woke up from sleep. He decided to return to his abode in the cliff, after taking leave of the king in the morning. When the sun arose, the king eagerly set his teeth on the mango the ascetic had given. The next instant, he felt giddy and swooned. The queen cried in shock. The soldiers rushed to get the doctor. The royal doctors brought the king back to consciousness. They tested the mango the king intended to eat and found that it was poisoned.

King Parantaka discussed the matter with his ministers. All of them were unanimous. The king said: 'The ascetic wants to betray me. That is why, with a view to rule the nation, he wants to usurp the kingdom after killing me. But, he has saved me twice. Due to gratitude, I do not want to kill him. However, it would not be wise to keep him in the palace any longer. Immediately, take him away from the palace and leave him at his abode on the cliff.' Thus ordered the king.

The ascetic was waiting to take leave of the king and leave for his abode. He was approached by the prime minister with soldiers, who took him to his abode on the cliff. The prime minister said: 'O ascetic! Our king is a good person. That is why, even after knowing of your plot to kill him by poisoning the mango, he ordered us to leave you on the cliff. If you ever again step into the capital city, you will be beheaded!'

The ascetic enjoyed the goddess's divine play. Everything was like a play to him. He told to himself: 'O goddess! Because of your divine grace, a beggar like me was worshipped in the palace. You blessed me by converting my evil deeds into good actions. Your divine play is indeed unmatched! The moment your blessings were removed, I was thrown out of the palace.

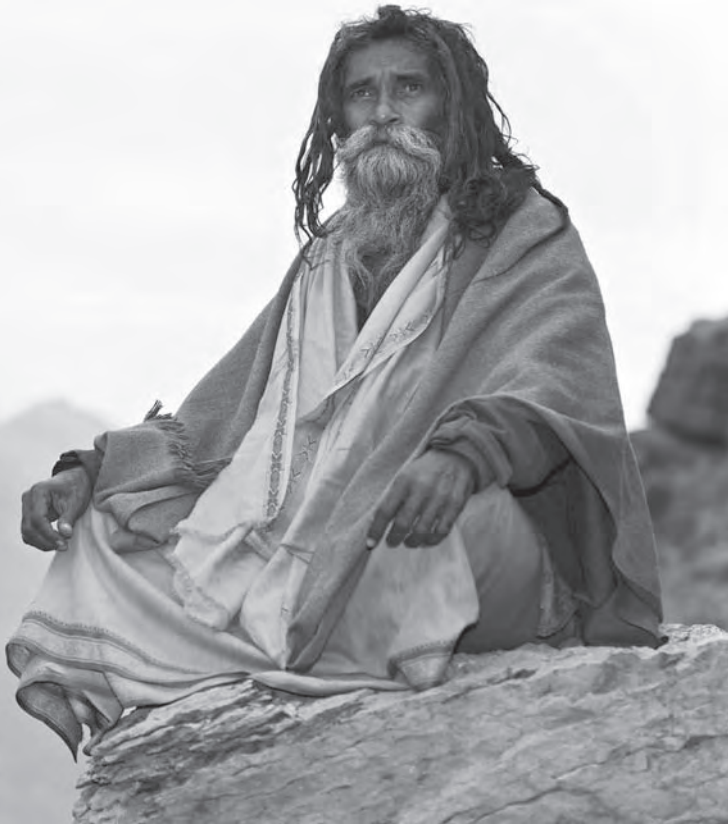
The king and the people, who worshipped me, started insulting me.'

The ascetic continued his spiritual austerities, forgetting all these events. This story explains the power of God's blessings. Good alone comes to that person, who has only God's support and no other support. Those who believe in God and live in surrender to God are indeed blessed, for they are not forsaken.

Failure alone comes to the person without God's support, however much worldly support one might have. Because they had the support of Sri Krishna, the Pandavas came out victorious even after facing innumerable troubles. Though Duryadhana had much worldly strength, he failed because of no support of God.

Even death fears one who has God's support. Without God's support, one has to fear everyone. The Mahabharata says that Arjuna, who had achieved great victories because of Sri Krishna's support had to fail miserably after Sri Krishna's passing.

❧



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Philosophy of Mahakavi Bharati

Sadhu Prof. V Rangarajan

Bharatamata Gurukula Ashram
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Krishnarajapuram, Bengaluru 560036.
www.sribharatamatamandir.org. 320
pp. PB. ₹ 300.

The writings of any eminent poet are not only a treasure trove of poetic finesse, vaulting imagination, and vibrant thoughts but a magic mirror that vividly reflects the poet's bent of philosophy. Mahakavi Bharati's prolific writings are no exception to this general rule. The book under review analyses a few of his vast literary output and discerns distinct strands of philosophy running through them. This book begins by giving a brief outline of the poet's philosophy. It is pointed out that the poet's philosophy is wide-ranging and spans the fields of religion, culture, sociology, politics, ethics, aesthetics, economics, and literature. The book under review, however, confines its study to the domains of religious philosophy, social philosophy, and political philosophy. The author picks up the relevant ideas scattered in the poet's writings, strings them together, and charts a cohesive graph of the poet's philosophy. The salient features of the poet's philosophy, as set forth by the author, are given in the following passages.

The kernel of the poet's religious philosophy consists in his acceptance of Advaita, which proclaims the non-dualistic Brahman as the ultimate Reality and his conviction that this Absolute manifests as the pluralistic universe marked by mind-boggling multiplicities. The multiplicities are, according to the poet, not *mithya* or illusory but the genuine expressions of the one Divinity and hence possess the reality of the ground of Existence.

The poet's Advaita is realistic and fashioned on the model of Aurobindo's metaphysics. Parashakti, the poet's chosen ideal, is a quintessential manifestation of Brahman and commands the love and veneration of the poet in full measure. The poet revels in worshipping God as Mother. The great devotee of Mother, the epitome of primal Energy, energises and intensifies his innate sentiment of patriotism into a mighty force when he intuitively feels his Bharata Mata as Parashakti. The secret of his explosive patriotism lies in his poetic genius of synergising the devotion to the Goddess, *daiva* bhakti and the devotion to Bharata Mata, *desha* bhakti. Once this feat of the poet in consummating the fusion of the twin streams of devotion to Mother Goddess and devotion to the Motherland is grasped, all his other convictions and beliefs in the triple spheres of religious philosophy, political philosophy, and social philosophy are found to be the logical corollaries of his master conviction of the basic identity of the Mother Goddess and the Motherland.

At the political and the social level, the poet is portrayed as a fiery nationalist with a burning passion to smash the fetters of bondage of Bharata Mata. He upholds the ideal of national integration in his poems. He is shown as a champion of the underdog, as a pioneer of the emancipation of woman, as an indefatigable fighter for the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as a vehement critic of casteism and untouchability, as against the wholesome *varna* and *ashrama* enunciated in Hindu scriptures, and as a passionate lover of the Tamil language. He is shown as an advocate of egalitarianism, as a radical and rebel fulminating against all social evils, and as a dyed-in-the-wool liberal with a remarkable catholicity of outlook.

For all his extreme devotion to Parashakti, the poet avoids the suicidal pitfall of fanaticism. He has sung in praise not only of other gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon but has extolled Allah and Jesus also in his hymns. Thus, his religious

philosophy consists in his deep respect for other faiths and languages, his steadfast devotion to Sanatana Dharma and his Vedantic wisdom marked by unitive vision and integral experience. His unique genius lies in his emerging as a synthesiser of religion and patriotism, thereby accomplishing the feat of mutual rejuvenation of these two sentiments. The poet is a firm believer in the concept of being liberated even when living, *jivan-mukti*. He comes under the benign influence of such stalwarts as Sister Nivedita whom he accepts as his jnana guru, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Vallalar, and V V S Aiyar. His devotional face that is charmingly progressive and emits scriptural radiance, comes into sharp focus when he adopts the various moods of devotion and conceives of Sri Krishna in different patterns of relationship. He is an incorrigible optimist with infectious hopes of the quick end of Kali Yuga and happy advent of Treta Yuga. The poet claims to be a Siddha, 'a worshipper of the will, pure and simple, the shakti of God'. He is influenced by Western poets like Shelley and has the credentials to be ranked as an international poet. He is quite fluent in English and has many English writings to his credit. His nationalism, though extremely virile, does not go berserk but recognises the utility and indispensability of a healthy dose of internationalism. His views on education and language are very progressive. The poet is a warm admirer of Sanskrit and considers it worthy to be the national language. He is a prophetic poet, who predicts many achievements in India in the fields of science and technology.

A remarkable merit of this book is that many songs of the poet are given in Tamil as well as in English transliteration. The meanings of the poems are given in English. These poems, which are representative of his diverse thoughts and convictions, are the raw material from which the poet's philosophical persuasions are deduced to weave a convincing tapestry of his rich philosophy.

This book has a useful bibliography. The above ideas are recorded in five parts under the titles, 'Concept of Shakti in Mahakavi Bharati's Philosophy', 'Religious Philosophy of Mahakavi Bharati', 'Political Philosophy of Mahakavi Bharati', 'Social Philosophy of Mahakavi Bharati', and 'Various

Influences in the Philosophy of Mahakavi Bharati'. This book is certainly a scholarly dissertation that admirably raises the architecture of philosophy of the patriot-philosopher-poet on convincing foundations of intensive study and research.

N Hariharan
Madurai



The Tibetan Medicine and Your Health

Tove Langemyr Larsen

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110007.
www.mlbd.com. xxii + 211 pp. PB.
₹ 300. ISBN 9788120834453.

The roots of bio-individual diagnosis and treatment in natural medicine truly come from authentic systems of medicine, like Tibetan medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, Unani Tibb, and Chinese medicine. Tibetan medicine has been documented 2,500 years ago, and contains elements that date back even further. This book describes, in detail, characteristics of common pathologies coupled with effective therapies in Tibetan medicine. Larsen gives us not only a sense of Tibetan medicine's application in current conditions, but also a descriptive account of Tibet's tumultuous history and why its survival is significant.

Larsen shares with us fascinating cases and accounts that were shared with her by Dr Lobsang Wangyal, a personal physician of H H the Dalai Lama who visited Norway. Most of this book is intertwined with cases to paint a picture of what it is like to be a fly on the wall in Dr Wangyal's clinic. There are discussions on conditions like asthma, arthritis, cancer, headaches, multiple sclerosis, psychiatry, and the like. Larsen had her first encounter with Tibetan medicine after struggling with cancer and this book is an inspiration in an effort to share what it can do.

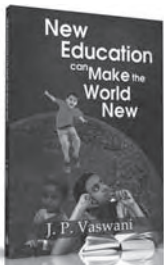
In addition to case discussions and study, there is ample overview on Tibetan medicine diagnosis, the three defects and humours of wind, bile, and phlegm; a similar approach as Ayurveda's *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. In addition there are the similar unique principles of diagnosis such as pulse, tongue, and unique urine analysis. Therapies in Tibetan medicine range from herbal massages, potent alchemical

herbal medicines, dietary therapy, psychology, herbal baths, gold hammer acupuncture, moxa acupuncture, cupping, and homay therapy. This book gives a lovely outline of these therapies.

H H the Dalai Lama says in his message in the beginning of this book: 'This book is a compilation of articles and talks by qualified Tibetan physicians and scholars of Tibetan medicine, who in addition to their traditional training in Tibet and India have been exposed to a modern scientific environment. Therefore, I am confident that it will be of great benefit to serious students of Tibetan medicine, as well as providing an opportunity for general readers to appreciate this valuable but sometimes overlooked aspect of the Tibetan cultural heritage' (v).

Melissa Yaden, DAOM, AWP, LMP

Ayurveda and Chinese Medicine Practitioner
Port Townsend, Washington State, USA



New Education Can Make the World New

J P Vaswani

Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd, A-59, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase II, New Delhi 110 020. Website: www.sterling-publishers.com. 2011. 111 pp. ₹ 195. PB. ISBN 9788120757578.

Education is, at once, the parent and offspring—the cause and the effect—of any culture. The book under review, that sports a textbook look in keeping with its professed theme of education and is authored by a noble and popular spiritualist-cum-social activist, admirably diagnoses the ills that plague the present-day hedonistic and money-driven society and insightfully suggests effective remedies for those ills. Society's ailments are diagnosed as selfishness, hunger for power, adoration of Mammon, callousness, jettisoning of the values of humanism, sympathy, brotherliness, selflessness, and self-sacrifice, and schism between skills and values. The remedy suggested is resuming the ancient system of balanced education in which the pivotal feature is the happy blend of skills and values.

After emphatically affirming in the first section that true education consists in the expansion of the spirit and a migration from darkness to light, a

brief overview of education in the world is made in the second section. Contributions made by various nations of the world to the various aspects of learning are briefly mentioned. India's unique contribution to the learning system is shown as the gurukul system of education with its core philosophy of the imperative of lofty values to guide the skills. In section three, the gurukul system of India is discussed in detail. Vedic and mythological fables are narrated to illustrate the salient features of this system. The role and functioning of ancient universities of India such as Nalanda and Takshashila and the centres of learning such as Kanchi and Varanasi in promoting value-based education are highlighted.

Section four deals with the exciting story of how Sadhu Vaswani's vision translated into the Mira Movement of education with its emphasis on the triple training—of the head, the hand, and the heart—and its fourfold ideals of simplicity, service, purity, and prayer. The five vital aspects of quality in education, character-building, community service, love of Indian ideals, reverence for humanity, and global vision are dealt with.

Section five hits the nail on the head when it states that though modern education has sharpened the brain, it has hardened the heart. The divorce of skills from values—of the archer Arjuna from the yogi Krishna—is shown as the malady crippling the modern education.

The next three sections deal with 'Women's Education', 'Education—the Unfulfilled Need', which is nothing but the need to know how to live in the right way, and the need for Value-based Education.

The next four sections show how the edifice of education should be supported by the four pillars of character-building, compassion, culture, and reverence for all life.

The special merit of this book lies in its having a number of memorable quotations from educational experts and spiritual luminaries and crisp narratives in a lighter vein to drive home the points.

This book is a timely arrival as it advocates an educational system that insists on the necessity for skills and knowledge to be guided by lofty values so that the current disastrous downslide of society towards epicurean ethos and selfishness syndrome may be halted before it is too late.

N Hariharan

MANANA

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The Bhāgavata Purāna

Eds. Ravi M Gupta And Kenneth R Valpey

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York, NY 10023. USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2013. xiii + 279 pp. \$36. PB. ISBN 9780231149990.

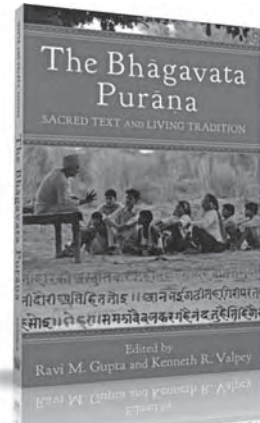
THE WORLD KNOWS HINDUISM as the religion of the Vedas, the ancient hymns used for sacrificial ritual; or as the wisdom seers recorded in the Upanishads some two millennia ago; or indeed as the poetry of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna's teachings on duty and devotion to the disheartened warrior Arjuna. No doubt these texts are widely revered by Hindus as the philosophical foundations of their tradition. And yet what Hindus know intimately, perform repeatedly, and teach their children are texts of a very different sort—the epic story of the Ramayana and the ancient lore of the Puranas.

Purana is a genre of sacred literature that began as oral histories recited by bards in public assemblies, even as they are recited today. At nearly four hundred thousand verses in Sanskrit, the bulk of the material found therein reached stable form during the reign of the Guptas in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., although dating particular Puranas has been difficult. There are eighteen major Puranas, and together they form the source material for much Hindu belief and practice.

The Puranas are repositories of narrative, cosmology, and theology centered on particular deities, most frequently Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi. In the words of Gavin Flood, the Puranas 'must not be seen as random collections of old tales, but as highly selective and crafted expositions

and presentations of worldviews and soteriologies, compiled by particular groups of Brahmins to propagate a particular vision'. In the Vaishnava Puranas, this vision is articulated through accounts of Vishnu's salvific deeds when he descends to earth in various *avatars* (avatars); accounts of the exemplary lives of his devotees as well as their demonic detractors; genealogies of kings in whose dynasties the Lord appears; descriptions of the cosmogony and cosmology of the universe; theologies establishing the preeminence of Vishnu; and prescriptions for the practice of yoga, especially the yoga of bhakti, or loving devotion. All this material is presented in the course of conversations between sages and kings, whereby typically the latter are looking for solutions to their own troubles and the ills of the world in general. As one narrator quotes another, conversations become nested within one another, many layers deep, lending an endless—and seemingly trackless—character to the text.

The Bhagavata Purana is the most widely heard and beloved of the Puranas. One can go to any major (and many a smaller) Indian city to find banners advertising upcoming recitations of the Bhagavata Purana. Narratives from this Purana are regularly reenacted in both folk and classical traditions of dance and theater. Scenes from the Bhagavata are carved permanently into the walls of stone temples and embedded



in the landscape of pilgrimage sites. This is the Purana that is most often retold in song, sculpture, painting, vernacular poetry, and, indeed, bedtime stories for children.

This focus on the Bhagavata is not altogether surprising, for the text stands out among the Puranas in more ways than one. The Bhagavata, traditionally said to have eighteen thousand verse couplets, is a Vaishnava Purana that gives preeminence to Krishna, the blue-hued deity whose playful and heroic activities predominate in book 10, by far the longest of the work's twelve books. The word *bhagavata* means 'related to Bhagavan, the Blessed Lord,' referring primarily to devotees of Krishna. This Purana offers a sophisticated Vaishnava theology that is grounded in the philosophical traditions of Vedanta and Samkhya, using them in the styles of *kavya*—classical Sanskrit poetry—than to the simple Sanskrit of other Puranas. The Bhagavata sees itself as the ripe fruit of Vedic revelation, whose ambrosial juice can be fully relished only by those who are refined in taste and sensibility, but which anyone can learn to appreciate by diligently hearing and reading this Purana.

There may be as many ways to hear or read the Bhagavata Purana as there are listeners or readers, yet we find that there are two broad categories of approach, and it is into these that the essays in this volume have been organized. Part 1, 'The World of the Bhagavata,' directs our attention to the web of meanings that creates and sustains the work's dialogues, reasonings, and narratives, while part 2, 'The Bhagavata in the World,' focuses on the several ways this text has been shaped or represented in the world, and how it has shaped the world around it.

Especially for readers unfamiliar with the Bhagavata Purana (and the Puranic literature more generally), we have constructed the remainder of this introduction around two

narratives—one from within the Bhagavata, and one about the Bhagavata in sixteenth-century Bengal—intermittently highlighting important themes that are taken up in greater detail by our authors. This structure reflects traditional Sanskrit commentarial practice, whereby readers of the Bhagavata Purana are pitched directly into the text, usually a few verses at a time, then assisted by a commentator in understanding the original text.

The World of the Bhagavata

As long as anyone can remember, the gods and demons have been at war. But once, the Bhagavata Purana tells us, they declared a truce and decided to work together to extract the ambrosia of immortality from the sea. This story, the Churning of the Milk Ocean, may be seen as a microcosm of the Bhagavata as a whole. It is one of the longest-running narratives in the Purana, spanning eight chapters in book 8. The themes latent within the narrative permeate the entire text; the values and anxieties expressed by the characters involved run throughout the Bhagavata. Let us therefore paraphrase the story, paying attention to what it can tell us about the Purana as a whole. Let us enter the world of the Bhagavata.

The universe is faced with a grave problem—the gods have been defeated and rendered powerless by the demons, who now rule heaven. The world is in the hands of corrupt leadership, and thus dharma—world order and the practice for sustaining that order—has been compromised. The gods seek help from the demiurge Brahma, who takes them all to the Supreme God, Vishnu. Vishnu's advice is surprisingly pragmatic: cooperate with the demons for a common purpose.

The preservation of dharma is the Bhagavata's concern from the beginning, in its outermost frame story.



REPORTS

News of Branch Centres

Sri Basudeb Banerjee, Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal, inaugurated the third floor on the Swami Vivekananda Sesquicentenary Building of **Sikshanamandira**, a residential college of teacher education under **Saradapitha**, on 13 August 2016 in the presence of the General Secretary and others. The new floor has been built to house *Swami Vivekananda Centre for Multidisciplinary Research in Educational Studies*, a research wing of the college.

Ramakrishna Math, Chennai in association with two other organisations conducted National Awareness Convention on Leprosy at Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai, on 20 August. Many eminent doctors, scientists, and social activists addressed the convention. On this occasion, Swami Akhandananda Award was conferred to an organisation in Chattishgarh which is working for the elimination of leprosy. Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare and a number of other dignitaries attended the valedictory session. A souvenir was also released in the convention which was attended by more than 300 people including about 100 leprosy-afflicted persons.

The eleventh convocation of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University** for the faculties of Disability Management and Special Education (DMSE) and General and Adapted Physical Education and Yoga (GAPEY) was held at the University's faculty centre in Coimbatore Mission centre on 20 August. In the same programme, the faculty of DMSE launched a quarterly magazine, *Wonders of Touch*, which is printed both in braille for the totally blind and large-size regular characters for the partially blind.



Jagruti Cultural Competitions at Vijayawada

Ramakrishna Math, Puri has put up a book-stall on platform number 5/6 at Puri Railway Station. It was inaugurated on 25 August.

A student of class 10 of the school run by **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Medinipur** secured first rank in the 15th National Cyber Olympiad conducted by Science Olympiad Foundation, Gurgaon. He was awarded a gold medal, a certificate, and a sum of ₹ 50,000/- in a programme held in New Delhi on 12 June.

A student of the hostel attached to **Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur** has secured the Best Student Award 2015-16 of Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University. The award comprising a certificate and a citation was handed over to him on 4 August.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka, Bangladesh organised a day-long seminar entitled 'Value-oriented Education for the Society' on 14 January 2017 at its premises. Home Minister Mr Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal MP, inaugurated the seminar while Swami Divyananda, Trustee, Ramakrishna Math and Member, Governing Body, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math and Prof. Syed Anwar Husain, Department of History, Dhaka University, were present as special guests. 500 delegates, students, and teachers from different colleges and universities from 24 districts of the country participated. It was the first time any branch of Ramakrishna Mission in Bangladesh organised such a seminar on values education. It was highly appreciated by the participants, monks, and others and they requested to arrange such seminars all over the country.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada conducted Jagruti Cultural Competitions for high school students on 19 February 2017 at its school premises in Sitanagaram. The essay, elocution, and quiz competitions based on the life of Sister Nivedita and Swami Vivekananda were conducted for two age groups—11–12 years and 13–15 years separately. 1,300 students from 50 schools of East Godavari, West Godavari, Guntur, Krishna, Khammam, and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana participated. Prizes in the form of cash, certificates, and books exceeding worth ₹ 2 lakhs were given away to the winners.

Values Education and Youth-related Programmes Conducted by Centres in India


Nagpur Math conducted a youths' convention on 6 August in which 250 youths participated.

Puri Mission Ashrama held a youths' convention on 26 August in which 421 youths from different colleges and universities of Puri took part.

Relief

Flood Relief: India: (i) **Assam:** In the wake of devastating floods caused by incessant rains and breach of riverbanks in Dhemaji district, **Itanagar** centre distributed 7,600 kg rice, 1,900 kg dal, 380 kg edible oil, 190 kg molasses, 380 kg salt, 3,800 matchboxes, 760 bars of soap, 380 kg detergent powder, 760 packets of candles, 760 mats, and 380 utensil sets, each set containing 4 plates, 4 cups, and 4 tumblers, on 11 September among 380 affected families in Kabu Chapori Sele village in Jonai sub-division. (ii) **Bihar:** (a) **Chapra** centre distributed 1,200 kg rice flakes and 250 kg molasses among 426 flood-affected families in Revelganj and Sadar blocks in Saran district from 31 August to 6 September. (b) **Patna** centre distributed 2,610

kg rice flakes, 1,400 kg molasses, 1,548 kg gram flour, 1,500 kg salt, 600 litres of fruit juice, 6,292 matchboxes, and 7,800 candles among 1,548 families in Maner and Fatuwa blocks in Patna district from 29 to 31 August. (iii) **Madhya Pradesh: Allahabad** centre distributed 2,025 kg flour, 162 kg dal, 830 kg potatoes, 162 kg salt, 162 saris, 162 dhotis, 162 chaddars, 162 blankets, 1220 bamboos, and 83 plastic sheets among 83 flood-affected families of 5 villages in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh, on 22 and 23 September. (iv) **Telangana: Hyderabad** centre served cooked food and distributed bread, biscuits, and milk to nearly 1,000 affected people in Banjara Hills, Lalapet, and Begumpet areas of Hyderabad from 24 to 26 September. **Bangladesh: Jessore** centre distributed 8,000 kg rice, 3,200 kg potatoes, 670 kg rice flakes, 540 packets of mosquito-coils, 540 packets of detergent powder among 1,800 flood-affected families in Manirampur, Keshabpur, and Abhaynagar sub-districts in Jessore district from 1 to 4 September.

Cyclone Relief: India: Andhra Pradesh: The devastating cyclone on 12 September and subsequent downpour caused severe water inundation in some districts of the state. On 15 and 16 September, **Vijayawada** centre distributed 250 kg rice, 100 kg red gram, 50 kg sugar, 25 kg tamarind, 50 litres of edible oil, 50 kg flour, 100 towels, 100 rugs, 100 saris with blouses, and 50 utensil sets, each set containing 2 plates, 2 tumblers, a pot, and a ladle, among 50 affected families of Macherla village in Guntur district. **Fiji:** Continuing its relief work among the people affected by Winston Cyclone, **Fiji** centre distributed 5,764 packets of 12 varieties of agricultural seeds, 166 rolls of fishing lines, 2,000 water containers of 20 litres size, 110 computers, and various other relief materials to thousands of affected families from June to September. During the same period the centre also provided medical assistance to 3,974 affected people. 

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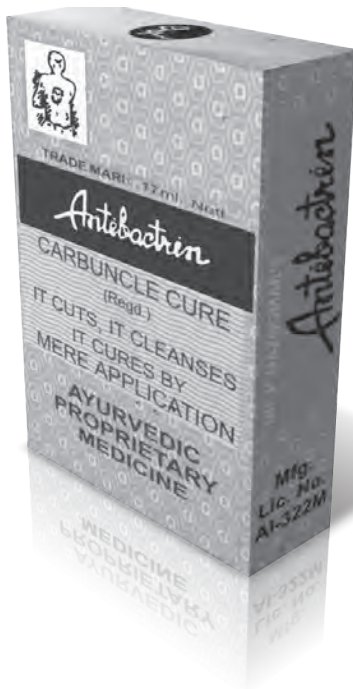
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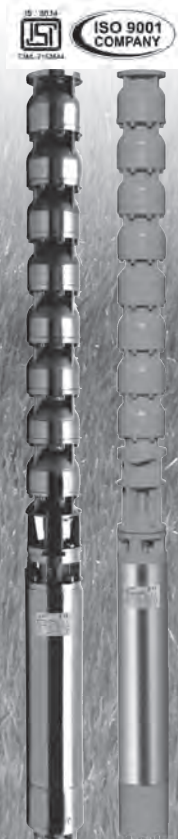
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An Appeal

The incessant rain in Uttarakhand has brought about destruction on a large scale this year.

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Meanwhile in this ancient land of pilgrimage this ashrama carved out in Shi Shri Thakur's name has found a place in the hearts of many devotees. Lovers of pilgrimages, the Himalayan people, have accepted this new place of worship (established in 2014) dedicated to Thakur Maa Swamiji with love, respect and devotion.

Therefore, taking the future into consideration the need is to earmark the sliding zones and build strong retaining walls.

For this purpose, the estimated cost will be approximately 30 lakh rupees. We appeal to all devotees to please donate generously towards this venture. May Thakur Maa Swamiji shower their choicest blessings on each one of you.

This is my heartfelt prayer.

Yours in the lord

Swami Sarvatmananda
Secretary

For Communication

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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

Swami Vivekananda



ABP

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According to Swami Vivekananda, 'With the birth of Sri Ramakrishna the Golden Age has begun.' But today, for the generality of people, such an assertion may appear preposterous, with no sign of such a beginning visible anywhere. Who was Sri Ramakrishna? What was the purpose of his advent? Did he bring about a silent revolution, unseen on the surface?

This book skilfully deals with these issues, taking for its subject the Avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna and its universal significance. In the course of his discussion the author presents the different facets of an Avatara and the universal relevance of his message. Many other spiritual topics too are dealt with, all of which go into the making of this impressive and inspiring work.

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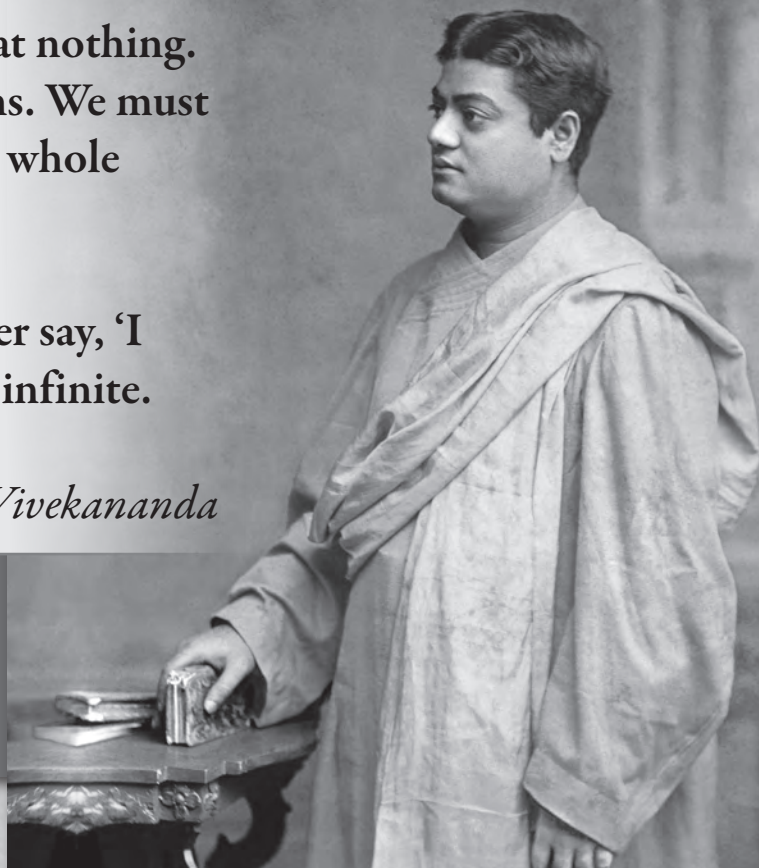
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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An Appeal

Sri Sarada Math - Rasik Bhita is the educational and cultural unit of Sri Sarada Math, Headquarters situated at the holy place where lived Rasik, the legendary sweeper of Dakshineswar Kali temple.

Keeping in mind Swami Vivekananda's call for aiming at manifesting the full potential of every member of our society, Rasik Bhita has come up with a 5 point holistic development programme to pave the way for both the inner and outer growth of the girl students. **From a handful of girls in 2001, the institute has blossomed into around 1300 students of which 25% are given training free of cost, others being charged a nominal fee.** Rasik Bhita also provides training in Communicative English through video conferencing to remote villages in West Bengal free of cost.

Placement: In collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services and m-Junction, Rasik Bhita has been providing training to enable students to secure employment. Till today, approximately 350 students of Rasik Bhita have been placed in the non-voice BPO sector of TCS and over the last few years, many more students have been placed in various reputed companies.

PRESENT REQUIREMENT: Due to expansion of multifarious activities, the number of students getting enrolled at Rasik Bhita has increased considerably over the last few years. **To continue the activities in a proper and better way, Rasik Bhita immediately needs to buy vacant plots and house, adjacent to Rasik Bhita, the cost of which is approximately Rs. 4 crores.** For this, we earnestly seek the financial help and support of all well-wishers, friends and organizations.

Cheques/drafts in favour of Sri Sarada Math along with a covering letter addressed to the In-charge, Sri Sarada Math-Rasik Bhita mentioning that the donation is meant for the Land and Building Fund will be thankfully acknowledged. Funds may also be transferred directly to the bank account of Rasik Bhita, vide e-mail rasikbhita10@gmail.com for bank details. Donations to the Math are exempt from Income Tax u/s 80G of the I.T. Act, 1961. The Math is also registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.



The best guide in life is strength.
In religion, as in all other matters,
discard everything that weakens
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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